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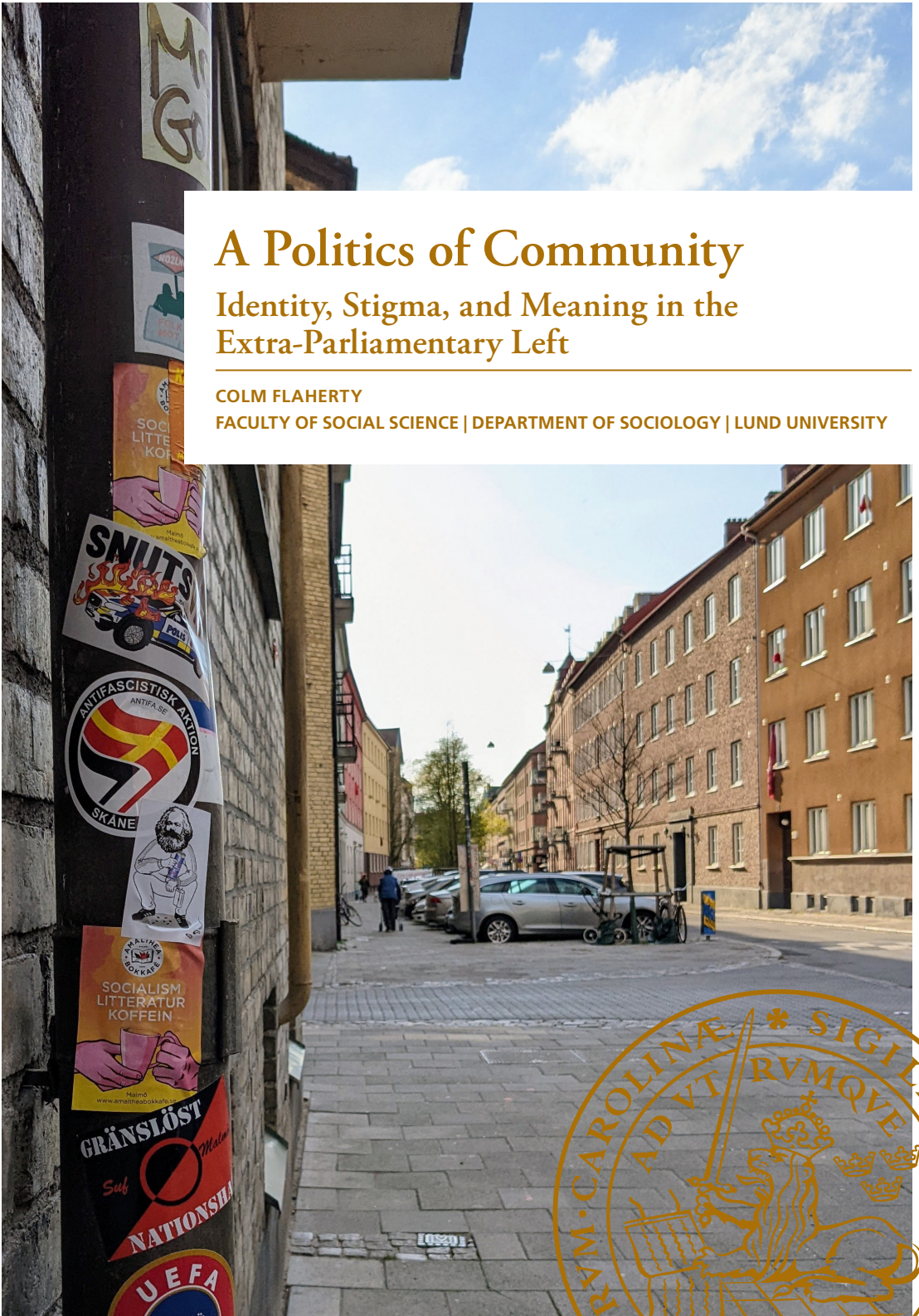
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A Politics of Community

Identity, Stigma, and Meaning in the Extra-Parliamentary Left

COLM FLAHERTY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE | DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY | LUND UNIVERSITY



A Politics of Community

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Identity, Stigma, and Meaning in the Extra- Parliamentary Left

Colm Flaherty



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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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<p>Abstract The prevalence and character of political action has changed throughout the Global North, as individuals increasingly turn away from more conventional forms of political participation towards more everyday, continuous types of actions. In this study, I conceptualize one form of everyday political action as a politics of community. A politics of community describes a form of purposeful, collective action that individuals engage in their attempts to challenge, change, or maintain the social organization of society. In a politics of community, individuals form a distinct and recognizable group that attempts to build community spaces, or interactions in which individuals experience a sense of intimacy, and feelings of belonging and being at home. One group that engages in a politics of community is the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden.</p> <p>Adopting a theoretical perspective with roots in interactionist thought, this study analyzes the social world of the extra-parliamentary left in southern Sweden. The extra-parliamentary left, a political group with radical left-libertarian principles, is a stigmatized actor within the arena of Swedish politics. Utilizing an ethnographic method, this study focuses not only on how this stigma arises, but also how individuals become and maintain an identity as extra-parliamentary leftists. I show that extra-parliamentary leftists often achieve stigma in interactions with other political actors, allowing the extra-parliamentary left to become a distinct and recognizable community. In these interactions, extra-parliamentary leftists engage in self-stigmatization to achieve not only a radical identity in Swedish politics, but also as a means of pursuing social change. Second, this study shows that individuals only become extra-parliamentary leftists through participation in the activities of the extra-parliamentary left. I demonstrate that individuals often first encounter extra-parliamentary habits in orbiting social worlds and learn to view these habits as desirable only in interaction with significant others. Third, I explore how extra-parliamentary leftists use self-segregation in their attempts to create community spaces, attempting to create interactional patterns removed from the dominant patterns in Swedish society. I demonstrate that these community spaces remain fragile and vulnerable to interruption, and that the extra-parliamentary left must constantly find ways to address these breaches and recreate community spaces, or risk disintegration.</p> <p>The dissertation concludes in noting both the inherent contradictions and challenges involved in radical political action as well as the importance of context in understanding radicality. I argue that focusing on routine, everyday action and interaction allows us to better examine and understand how individuals join and recreate groups involved in collective action. Finally, I argue that studying the accomplishment of collective action, rather than solely its consequences, allows us to not only better understand changing patterns of political behavior but even the power relations and structures at work within our societies.</p>		
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A Politics of Community

Identity, Stigma, and Meaning in the Extra-
Parliamentary Left

Colm Flaherty



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Colm

Malmö, May 2022

Abbreviations

ABF	The Worker's Educational Association
AFA	Anti-Fascist Action
AFS	Alternative for Sweden
GAF	Gothenburg's Anti-Fascist Front
LAS	The Employment Protection Act
LO	The Swedish Trade Union Confederation
MSB	The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
NMR	The Nordic Resistance Movement
RBC	The Red and Black Collective
SAC	The Central Organization of the Workers of Sweden
SAP	The Social Democratic Worker's Party of Sweden
SD	The Sweden Democrats
SSU	The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League
SUF	The Swedish Anarcho-Syndicalist Youth Federation
Säpo	The Swedish Security Service
UV	The Young Left (<i>Ung Vänster</i>)
VP	The Left Party

1 Introduction

“Onto the street! Onto the street!”

Sven’s voice rises above the din of confusion. I am frozen. Smoke surrounds us. His clear instructions ring out. I follow blindly, jumping down from a raised lawn onto the street. The frenzied mass disappears. Sven, Daniel, and I are the only three who have chosen to move sideways rather than fleeing backwards in the face of a police charge. We relax. The police retreat. We stroll back towards the crowd, now about 50 feet from where we were originally, keeping a watchful eye trained on the lines of police. As we walk, I hear comments from those around us, such as ‘fucking pigs’ or ‘they got me on the arm’, with the ones unlucky enough to be at the front of the group and not in Sven’s vicinity having borne the brunt of a police charge.

This experience occurred while I was in Gothenburg in 2017. I had followed several individuals from Malmö to Gothenburg to attend the radical book fair. Every year, extra-parliamentary anti-capitalist leftist groups organize the radical book fair, as an opportunity to share knowledge, discuss political strategies, and socialize. In 2017, one topic dominated and animated the gathering. A few weeks earlier, The Nordic Resistance Movement¹ (NMR) had received a permit from the police to hold a demonstration on the same weekend as the radical book fair. This weekend was even the same weekend as the larger Gothenburg Book Fair, which brings together authors and publishers from all over Scandinavia to discuss books and writing (Ferhatovic & Samara, 2017). NMR is a neo-Nazi political organization in Scandinavia whose members often attempt to hold marches and demonstrations, wearing green and white uniforms (see Kenes, 2021 for a longer description of NMR). Prior to the planned march in Gothenburg, NMR’s members were optimistic. On NMR’s news website, *Nordfront*, articles claimed that over 1000 people planned to attend the demonstration, and that “not only

¹ *Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen*, in Swedish.

will the demonstration be massive, it will be epic!” (Redaktionen Nordfront, 2017; Vejdeland, 2017). Yet, in the weeks preceding their march, a massive counterdemonstration began to take shape. Gothenburg’s Anti-Fascist Front (GAF) promoted a counter-demonstration arguing that “the open presence of NMR in Gothenburg is unacceptable” and that an openly neo-Nazi march in the city can only be understood through the “culture and media establishment’s shameless accommodation of the Nazis in *Nya Tider*² at the Gothenburg Book Fair” (Göteborgs Antifascistiska Front, 2017). Resistance to the neo-Nazi march, if there was to be any, was left in the hands of non-institutional protest movements, characterizing themselves as the true defenders of a democratic, open society.

The counterdemonstration exceeded all expectations while NMR’s original demonstration went poorly. Over 10 000 individuals attended the counterdemonstration, organized in part by groups with links to the broader national anti-fascist network, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA). Only about 500 individuals joined the NMR demonstration, which found itself unable to march along its planned route and ended in conflict with the police. Even the leader of NMR was arrested. Reflecting upon the counterdemonstration, a member of GAF commented “The whole city was taken over by anti-fascists! Here came them from Denmark, there was that comrade, there was that family with Grandma on the way to the blockade...” (Concha, 2017, p. 49). Although a small extra-parliamentary group did most of the planning for the counterdemonstration, they managed to mobilize a broad group of individuals, including many who were not organized in political groups or even necessarily leftists.

About ten months later, in August 2018, I attended another event organized by an anti-fascist group. This event was in Malmö and was arranged by AFA Malmö, the local branch of the national AFA network. In contrast to the counterdemonstration in Gothenburg, which relied on mass mobilization and the participation of the public, this event was directed specifically towards other extra-parliamentary leftist groups in Malmö and Lund. Instead of a conflictual protest, this was a *brännboll*³ tournament. The tournament took place in a park in Malmö and involved four different extra-parliamentary groups. Rather than black clothes,

² *Nya Tider* is an extreme right-wing news site with links to the Swedish Democrats and NMR. In 2016, they took part in the Gothenburg Book Fair for the first time.

³ *Brännboll* (Literally translated: burn ball) is a Swedish game somewhat similar to baseball or cricket. It is often played in schools or at Swedish holiday celebrations.

hoods, and balaclavas, the participants wore gym shorts and t-shirts. It was a family event, with the organizing group selling hot dogs, sausages, beer, and soda. Small children ran around the grass and even occasionally onto the playing field, and the event had the general feel of a neighborhood cookout. Participants seized the opportunity to catch up with friends, enjoying the sunshine and the company. In total, about 75 people attended the event. AFA Malmö summarized the event on Twitter, writing “Yesterday, AFA Malmö’s traditional antifascist brännboll tournament took place in central Malmö. We want to congratulate Amalthea Bokkafé who, in the end, managed to take home the trophy after a strong performance! Good work everyone- see you on the streets!”

Finally, in May 2019, I attended a third event organized by a group with links to anti-fascism. This event was also a counterdemonstration, but occurred at Stortorget in Malmö, rather than in Gothenburg. In this case, the political party Alternative for Sweden⁴ (AFS) arranged a series of open meetings and demonstrations in public spaces throughout Sweden prior to the European parliamentary election. AFS is an extreme right-wing party which advocates for an immediate stop to asylum permits and an active deportation policy and has clear links to the Swedish white power movement (Leman & Vergara, 2018). Prior to their demonstration in Malmö, AFS stated that their top candidates for the EU election would be present and that they would mainly speak about “why Sweden must leave the European union” (Alternativ för Sverige, 2019). In response, an extra-parliamentary group called Skåne against Racism organized a counterdemonstration under the heading “No Racists in Our Malmö” (Skåne mot rasism, 2019). In total, about 250-300 individuals were present at Stortorget during the AFS event, with about 50 individuals supporting AFS and about 200 counterdemonstrators (Thörnkvist, 2019). While there were some small physical skirmishes between the two sets of demonstrators, such as a counterdemonstrator knocking the hat off the head of an AFS sympathizer, the confrontations remained largely verbal. Recapping the demonstration, SUF Lund (2019b)⁵ wrote “the secret fascists left towards the station with scarfs over their heads. That says enough about how welcome they must have felt in Malmö.” Like the counterdemonstration in Gothenburg, extra-parliamentary leftists classed this

⁴ In Swedish, *Alternativ för Sverige*.

⁵ SUF Lund is the Lund branch of the youth organization of the syndicalist union (see Chapter 7).

event as a success, and argued that anti-fascists had again managed to make their political opponents feel unwelcome in their cities.

At first glance, these three events appear dissimilar. They took place in different cities and the number of participants ranged from 75 to 10 000. Three different groups organized the events, and they took place in response to disparate political developments. Yet, several distinct factors unite these seemingly unrelated occurrences. First, an extra-parliamentary anti-fascist group with links to the national radical anti-fascist movement organized each event. Second, in the summation of these gatherings, the participants expressed feelings of joy and triumph, suggesting that each different event plays a role in the anti-fascist movement. Finally, the three events had a number of participants in common. Some individuals traveled from Malmö to Gothenburg in 2017, played brännboll in 2018, and protested against AFS in 2019. An even greater number took part in two of the three events.

These individuals helped plan the events, stood on the front lines of the counterdemonstrations, and interacted with the police and surrounding society in a variety of ways. While they may not belong to any of the groups listed above, or belong to AFA, they engage in coordinated, active political participation as a core component of their identity and an abiding aspect of their social relations. They have grown up together, become friends with each other, fought with each other, been arrested together, and attempted to change the world together. They encounter each other not only at demonstrations or group meetings, but in bars around Malmö, at the beach, at birthday parties, and at weddings. They do not limit their activities solely to anti-fascism, but define themselves as a group of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-fascist, and feminist activists who are a part of the Swedish extra-parliamentary leftist movement.

In this dissertation, I set out to explore and analyze the social world (Strauss, 1978) these individuals create together and investigate what it means to be an extra-parliamentary leftist in Sweden. Together, extra-parliamentary leftists engage in something they call extra-parliamentary politics. I argue that the activities that make up extra-parliamentary politics are best conceptualized as a *politics of community*. A politics of community involves coordinated, ongoing, everyday action with the goal of creating community spaces. It involves intimacy, commitment, and conviction and motivates individuals not only to engage in spectacular displays of action but even to adjust their career paths, romantic relationships, and leisure activities to be more in line with their political identities.

This poses particular problems for the extra-parliamentary left, as a stigmatized group in Swedish society (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, 2020b). Therefore, I also explore how individuals react to and manage stigma, and what the consequences of stigmatization are for individuals, and the group.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to understand and analyze the activities of the extra-parliamentary left as a politics of community and explore how individuals create, maintain, and recreate a stigmatized political community. Through a combination of ethnographic field work, interviews, and document analysis, I examine how individuals begin to participate in the extra-parliamentary left, adopt and represent an extra-parliamentary leftist identity, and how this community interacts with other groups in Swedish society. I situate the analysis in the broader arena of Swedish politics and explore the moral and practical tensions inherent in anti-capitalist activism within a capitalist society.

Thus, the research questions for this study are:

1. How do extra-parliamentary leftists acquire stigma and interact in broader societal arenas?
2. How and why do individuals become extra-parliamentary leftists?
3. How do individuals handle threats, tensions, and denials of their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists?

1.2 Political Action and Extra-Parliamentary Politics

Around the turn of the 21st century, social movement scholars began discussing the rise of the movement society in western democracies (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). Political participation appeared to have changed. The movement society thesis arose from observations of the “seeming pervasiveness of protest in many Western democracies and the apparent institutionalization of protest in these same countries” (Earl & Kimport, 2009, p. 222). Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, protest remained a common political tactic, in relation to subjects as

varied as the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, the climate strikes in northern Europe, and the anti-vaccination movement. Over the last 40 years, modes of political engagement appear to have shifted. Social movement activities are no longer regarded as unusual or spectacular but instead are part of the normal repertoire of political action. Soule and Earl (2005, p. 345) argue that “at the societal level...the repertoire of political participation has expanded from electoral activities (e.g., voting, working on political campaigns) to include activities typically associated with social movements (e.g., protest, demonstrations). Dalton (2008) and Welzel, Inglehart, and Deutsch (2005) find similar trends in their research, suggesting that what was once considered non-conventional political activity (e.g., boycotts, protests, strikes, etc.) has increased, while traditionally conventional political activity (e.g., party membership, voting, etc.) has decreased. Not only is party membership falling across Western Europe, but we see a growing variety in forms of protest, ranging from consumer boycotts to internet activism to community gardening (Blühdorn & Deflorian, 2021; Deflorian, 2021; Ponce & Scarrow, 2016; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011; Van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012). Several authors have even suggested that the riot is the defining characteristic of our current form of political engagement (Clover, 2016; Dikeç, 2017).

These developments have challenged scholars to reconceptualize political participation. 50 years ago, Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2) influentially defined political participation as “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take.” While this is an extremely narrow definition, it has the benefit of encompassing most of the activities we tend to regard as directly political, such as voting, donating money to political campaigns, and (most) demonstrations. However, this definition renders many of the activities discussed above non-political. We can instead define political participation broadly. Van Deth (2016, p. 1) suggests that “political participation can be loosely defined as citizens’ activities affecting politics.” With this definition, we can encompass new and growing forms of protest, but utilizing a broad definition has the disadvantage of turning every activity into a potentially political engagement. While on some level all action is political, analytically, a distinction between political and non-political activity is useful.

The answer to this dilemma lies in how we define politics, or political. If we restrict politics to the governmental sphere, then political action involves activity

directed at changing, maintaining, or challenging governmental authority. However, if we instead argue that politics deals more broadly with the social organization of society, encompassing family relations, the organization of work, and interactional principles, then actions aimed at changing, maintaining, or challenging social organization (defined broadly) are political. The participants in this study view politics in the second way. As one participant says, “Politics is all the questions surrounding how one organizes society, how we relate to each other in society...how power is arranged, and which power structures there are today and how you relate to them.” Political action, to extra-parliamentary leftists, includes not only demonstrations and political campaigns but even decision-making processes, everyday decisions, and interactional style. Rather than denoting a selection of unconnected activities, I argue in this dissertation that extra-parliamentary politics describes a way of life.

In connection with changing forms of political action, social movement scholarship has increasingly focused on contentious politics, lifestyle politics, and prefigurative politics. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, p. 6), in their introduction to contentious politics, noted 20 years ago that “the study of politics has too long reified the boundary between official, prescribed politics and politics by other means.” Contentious politics bounds political action differently, focusing on public, episodic, spectacular claims-making. Yet, extra-parliamentary politics emphasizes intra-group, everyday action. It is collective action, but not necessarily public or episodic collective action. Thus, while extra-parliamentary politics contains elements of contentious politics, we cannot properly classify it as contentious politics. Conversely, lifestyle politics (De Moor, 2017) emphasizes individual lifestyle change and private action “aimed at changing cultural and economic practices rather than targeting the state” (Haenfler, Johnson, & Jones, 2012, p. 6). Extra-parliamentary politics remains a collective endeavor, even if its targets resemble those of lifestyle politics. It is not, then, properly classified as lifestyle politics either. Finally, prefigurative politics describes a form of political action that “seeks to create the new society ‘in the shell of the old’ by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation” (Leach, 2013b, p. 1004). Extra-parliamentary politics contains elements of prefigurative politics, as individuals attempt to create and maintain an alternative social order. Yet, the extra-parliamentary left is not a total institution. The actions, habits, and routines of extra-parliamentary leftists can only be understood in the particular social context of Sweden, and in relation to

what occurs in other social spheres for individuals. Extra-parliamentary politics involves prefigurative action, but it is not only prefigurative. It is also reactive and habitual. Prefigurative politics, then, does not entirely describe extra-parliamentary politics either.

Lacking any immediate or obvious classification, extra-parliamentary politics poses conceptual problems. In the absence of clarity, Dewey (1927/2016, p. 66) argues that we must always begin from the “acts which are performed, not from the hypothetical causes for those acts, and consider their consequences.” Extra-parliamentary leftists hold demonstrations, support parties, picnicks, and sports tournaments. It is a group which engages in coordinated, collective action on a regular basis. Extra-parliamentary politics is a form of political action, as individuals view themselves and their political groups as challenging the dominant power structures within society. Political action occurs daily, as individuals attempt to represent (Strauss, 1959/1977, 1993) an extra-parliamentary leftist identity not only to themselves, but to political opponents, friends, family, and colleagues. Taken together, these acts add together to a form a manner of understanding and acting in the world. It is these habits (Dewey, 1922; James, 1890/1997) that define extra-parliamentary politics. In this dissertation, I conceptualize extra-parliamentary politics as *a politics of community*.

A politics of community describes a form of political action. Rather than reifying politics or political action, a politics of community encompasses a wide variety of everyday activities, interactions, and routines. It is a form of ongoing, continuous political action, where individuals change, maintain, or challenge social structures in daily interactions. It is a form of collective action, where individuals display a distinctive way of life. A politics of community is recognizable both to those involved in it and to those outside of it. Individuals motivate their actions in a politics of community in terms of societal organization and view themselves as upholding or contesting the dominant social order.

A politics of community is a sensitizing concept (Blumer, 1969). In this dissertation, I use a politics of community as a means of “developing a picture of the distinctive expressions” of extra-parliamentary politics, and as “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching” the empirical world (Blumer, 1969, pp. 149, 148). A politics of community does not have clear boundaries. I do not view this as a weakness, but as a strength, following Strauss’s (1993) argument that the world is in constant motion. As he writes elsewhere, we live in a world “marked by tremendous fluidity...where nothing is strictly determined” (Strauss,

1978, p. 123). Sensitizing concepts allow us to remain open to change, fluidity, and motion, rather than reifying and freezing the continuous nature of the world (Law, 2004). A politics of community follows action and interaction rather than actors (Lichterman, 2021). In this dissertation, I demonstrate how understanding extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community enables us to better understand, analyze, and explain the actions of extra-parliamentary leftists in Sweden. While extra-parliamentary politics resembles contentious politics, prefigurative politics, lifestyle politics, and even at times subcultural activity, it is none of these things. Instead, it is best understood as a politics of community.

1.3 The Extra-Parliamentary Left

This dissertation studies empirically a group I call the extra-parliamentary anti-capitalist left (extra-parliamentary left, for short). Although I discuss the specifics of my sample, my field work, and the empirical material in greater detail in Chapter 4, here it is worthwhile and necessary to briefly introduce and describe the group. The most common ways to describe the social group I examine are as an autonomous movement (Creasap, 2021; Flesher Fominaya, 2007, 2015; Leach, 2009) or as a radical left-libertarian movement (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015; Jämte, Lundstedt, & Wennerhag, 2020; Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015; Wennerhag, 2017a). I chose to refer to this group as the extra-parliamentary left for two reasons. First, I argue that it is the activities that define the group, rather than the ideology. As Leach (2009) notes in her study of the German *Autonom*, autonomous groups and movements seldom have clear ideological principles. The defining characteristic of the extra-parliamentary left is its political activities, not its ideology. When individuals act as extra-parliamentary leftists, they act in an extra-parliamentary manner. At its most basic level, extra-parliamentary as an adjective refers to actions, groups, or movements which occur or exist outside of the parliamentary arena (Arce & Kim, 2011). The extra-parliamentary left does not engage with the parliamentary arena—it is not a movement that seeks seats in the Swedish parliament, nor do members of the group believe that social change is best achieved through parliamentary processes. Second, this is the general term in use within the group I examine. Individuals refer to and discuss the extra-parliamentary movement in Sweden. While the term ‘autonomous’ is also in use, it is less common and refers to specific groupings within the broader extra-

parliamentary movement. Both because it is the way the participants generally define and understand their own movement, and because it refers to the activities which define the group, I therefore chose to call this group the extra-parliamentary left.

Nonetheless, while the extra-parliamentary left may not have a clear ideology, certain labels can be applied. First, this is a leftist group. Here, left refers to the traditional left-right divide where actors “strive for greater economic equality, support the interests of labor (against capital), are skeptical about the market’s (or capitalism’s) ability to organize the economy in a just way, and prefer state intervention to liberalized markets” (Wennerhag, 2017a, p. 6). To further differentiate the group, we can also apply the label anti-capitalist. Anti-capitalist means simply here that these individuals and groups define themselves as against capitalism, and in favor of a different economic system, usually socialism or syndicalism. Third, while I may refer to it as the extra-parliamentary left, this is a group that espouses left-libertarian or autonomous values. Wennerhag (2017a, p. 9) suggests that “libertarian values have been equated with attitudes stressing self-expression, individual autonomy, and pluralism/tolerance.” Flesher Fominaya (2007, p. 336) similarly notes that autonomous movements are “organized in a horizontal network fashion and underlain by the principles of self-organization, direct/participatory democracy, autonomy, diversity, and direct action.” She further argues that “the autonomous model for its part rejects representative democracy and majority rule and instead defends a participatory model, based on direct democracy and self-governance, with horizontal (non-hierarchical) structures, decision-making through consensus (if possible and necessary)...and rarely with permanent delegations of responsibility” (Flesher Fominaya, 2007, pp. 338-339). The extra-parliamentary left shares many of these characteristics. It is organized horizontally (at least formally), it stresses participation rather than representation, and individuals engage primarily in direct action. Importantly, the extra-parliamentary left shares few characteristics with traditional communist parties (often classed as the authoritarian left), and at least in southern Sweden, the two different leftist tendencies usually have little to no contact.

At times, the extra-parliamentary left is even referred to as a *radical* leftist movement (Hansen, 2020; Jämte et al., 2020). Radical in this context can refer to one of two things. Wennerhag (2017a, p. 5) defines ‘radicals’ as political actors “who are usually prepared to go one step further than mainstream political actors” but highlights that he does “not equate radicalism with the use of political

violence.” Conversely, other authors, such as Alimi, Bosi, and Demetriou (2015), explicitly equate radical groups with violence. As they write, “radicalization involves actual engagement in political violence” (Alimi et al., 2015, p. 11). The extra-parliamentary left, at times, qualifies as radical under both understandings. However, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, the extra-parliamentary left seldom engages in political violence. Rather, the radical quality of the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden relates to its willingness to adopt stigmatized identity markers to further its goals. I argue, primarily in Chapter 6, that the extra-parliamentary left and extra-parliamentary leftists achieve radicality in certain interactions and arenas, but that they are not necessarily always radical. For this reason, while it is at times appropriate to refer to the extra-parliamentary left as a radical movement, I chose not to include the word radical in my label of the social group.

1.4 Previous Research

Research on the contemporary extra-parliamentary movement in Sweden is slim. In Chapter 5, I detail the history of the extra-parliamentary left, the political context of Sweden, and introduce the empirical case of Malmö, but here I begin in exploring and discussing studies on similar groups and movements in Europe. Although national and regional political contexts continue to matter immensely in influencing political actions, several studies on ideologically similar groups exist. In this section, I also present research related to the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden and situate my study in relation to this.

Flesher Fominaya (2007, 2015) explores the autonomous movement in Spain. She argues that groups within the Spanish autonomous movement are attempting to move away from a closed environment, and instead build broader alliances (Flesher Fominaya, 2007). She further contends that the autonomous movement views itself as attempting to create viable alternatives to the institutional left, and often attempts to explicitly ground its practices in opposition to the institutional or traditional left, regarding it as “out of date, [and] hierarchical” (Flesher Fominaya, 2007, p. 343). Nonetheless, the article also points out that the autonomous movement often depends on the institutional left for resources, such as money, spaces, and legitimacy (Flesher Fominaya, 2007, pp. 344-345). In a later article, Flesher Fominaya (2015) analyzes the movement from a genealogical

perspective. She argues that although the autonomous movement was at times in abeyance or not always visible, activists affiliated with the movement continued to organize, often in more mainstream groups. She suggests that “activism is integrated into the day to day lives of those involved in movement subcultures...this suggests that continuity processes in pre-figurative, lifestyle, or subculture movements such as autonomous movements may be quite different to those in more institutionalized movements” (Flesher Fominaya, 2015, p. 158).

Leach (2009, 2013a) and Leach and Haunss (2008) find similar tendencies in the German autonomous movement. Leach and Haunss (2008, p. 268) use the concept of social movement scene to explore the German movement and argue that similar political groups will develop scenes when their “political ideals are intimately bound up with their day-to-day personal behaviors, and for whom defending, creating, and/or promoting a marginalized, repressed, or countercultural way of life is an essential aspect of their political praxis.” They further argue that identity conflicts within this type of movement are likely to be rooted in these day-to-day activities rather than “official movement organizations and activities” (Leach & Haunss, 2008, p. 273). In two other articles, Leach (2009, 2013a) presents some features of the collective identity of the German *Autonom*. She argues that “the longevity of this movement and its ability to sustain a collectivist-democratic structure is due in large part to the presence of deep contradictions in both their ideology and identity...and to their insistence on ‘making the contradictions transparent’ rather than ignoring or claiming to have resolved them” (Leach, 2009, p. 1044). Leach (2013a) identifies some features of this collectivist-democratic structure as transparent models of non-hierarchical organization and few binding long-term decisions. In both the German and Spanish cases, autonomous movements value non-hierarchical organizing and view political activity as an essential component of everyday life.

In terms of movement environment, the Danish context shares the most similarities with Sweden. Jämte (2017, p. 250), writing on anti-fascism, points out that Sweden and Denmark “are the two countries in Scandinavia that have had the most active and organized radical anti-fascist milieus in terms of numbers of protest events and groups.” The Danish and Swedish environments also have clear links and relations, as both Brink Pinto and Pries (2013, 2017) and Jämte (2017) demonstrate. I find further evidence for existing relations between these Danish and Swedish groups in this study, with AFA groups in the two countries organizing a yearly football tournament, and Swedish groups often attending

Danish events (and vice versa). In a study of the Danish radical left in the period between 1981-1995, Mikkelsen and Karpantschof (2001, p. 623) argue that “as a consequence of sustained strategic interaction with opponents and allies, the BZs [the Danish movement] developed a radical ideology and corresponding lifestyle which meant close social, cultural, and political contacts with the outside world—not what we would expect from a deprived and marginalized group.” Here, again, we see a focus on lifestyle and day-to-day activities developed in the group. However, Mikkelsen and Karpantschof (2001) highlight particularly the interactional nature of these developments. We cannot consider the movement outside of its context. In his later work, Karpantschof (2015) again emphasizes this point, arguing that the Youth House movement⁶ in Copenhagen was not inherently violent. Rather, the violence can only be explained as a consequence of the interactions between the movement, the police, and politicians in Copenhagen (Karpantschof, 2015). Wahlström (2011) and Karpantschof (2015, p. 50) also suggest that there is evidence of this group “developing a more permanent group-culture”, similar to Flesher Fominaya’s (2015) findings in the Spanish case.

Christensen (2010, p. 165) investigates aspects of this group culture, finding that “the positioning of hyper-masculinities constitutes a central part of collective identity formation.” She emphasizes the interactional nature of this identity formation, arguing that this construction of identity is “rooted in the political learning and development” that takes place within the radical left-wing movement and highlighting the importance of violent encounters with the police and political opponents (Christensen, 2010, p. 165). However, she also notes that this identity construction has led to conflict and critique within the Danish movement, and that “one of the main arguments for autonomous feminist organization within left-wing movements has been based on a critique of male dominance and gender discrimination within gender mixed movements”

⁶ The Youth House movement arose primarily around the closure of the Youth House in Copenhagen, which was “the most significant free-space for alternative milieus in the city...that was owned by the municipality but run by the activists” (Karpantschof, 2015, p. 43). The Copenhagen city council began discussing the closure of the space in 1996, but it was not until 2006 that the closure of the house was truly decided. The activists were eventually evicted, and the house demolished in 2007. This was an extremely violent process, with many conflicts between the activists and the police, including one event where “the Copenhagen activists organized an ‘International Brigade’ of militant foreigners, armed themselves with helmets, batons, etc. and engaged the police in a confrontation so savage that officers retreated and hid behind their armored vehicles” (Karpantschof, 2015, p. 45).

(Christensen, 2010, p. 158). Unlike the findings in the study of Leach and Haunss (2008) above, here conflicts are rooted not only in everyday life but in ‘official’ movement organizations and actions. Nonetheless, taken together, research on the Danish movement highlights the importance of political context and interactions, while at the same time still emphasizing the political nature of everyday activities within movements ideologically like the extra-parliamentary left.

I turn now towards research on the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden. Restricting ourselves to research on the contemporary movement, we find several different studies investigating the radical left in different areas of Sweden. Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015) and Jämte (2017) each explore strategic shifts in the actions of the extra-parliamentary left. Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015, p. 720) identify five strategies activists in Malmö and Stockholm used to “move forward after the Gothenburg crisis”⁷ based on interviews performed between 2009 and 2011. First, activists engaged in a micro-politics of everyday life, focusing on issues such as housing, and opening up the movement environment. As part of an attempt to connect these local struggles, activists found new theories, such as the work of David Harvey, and shifted from a Danish and German inspired theoretical understanding to an understanding based more in Italian Marxism (see Jämte, 2013). The final two strategies the authors identify are attempts to redefine the boundaries of discourse, through, for example, the foundation of think tanks, and a redefinition of militancy. This redefinition entailed a more careful usage of violent tactics, and a view of the violence of the 1990s as “a dead-end, both in terms of effectiveness and legitimacy” (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015, p. 729).

Jämte (2017) finds similar strategies in his analysis of shifts in radical anti-fascism in Denmark and Sweden, based on interviews conducted between 2012 and 2015. He identifies four responses to the electoral success of right-wing parties, such as the Swedish Democrats and the Danish People’s Party, in Sweden and Denmark. The first two strategies entail a continuation of previous anti-fascist tactics, in slightly different form. First, some activists have chosen to focus solely on the neo-Nazi branch of the extreme right, viewing themselves as “guardsman or ‘defensive units’ [who] make it possible to build broader left-wing or anti-racist movement” (Jämte, 2017, p. 257). However, another response has been to extend or continue previous tactics used against fascist movements to populist parties, in

⁷ See section 5.3.

holding counterdemonstrations and carrying out threats or attacks. The two responses use largely the same tactics, but fascism and anti-fascism are understood differently, with the first response suggesting a narrower view of anti-fascist political action, while the second sees the role of radical anti-fascists as much broader.

The final two responses Jämte (2017) identifies are similar to those Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015) discuss. The third response highlights a turn towards everyday life in political organizing, while the fourth response Jämte (2017, p. 262) finds involves activists “leaving their usual extra-parliamentary arena to become involved in established civil society organizations or with left, Green, or feminist political parties.” However, he notes that this remains an uncommon development, and that many activists remain tied to the extra-parliamentary movement despite their involvement in parliamentary politics. Taken together, these two articles suggest that in the early part of the 2010s, the extra-parliamentary left became more interested in local, everyday issues, moving away from broad global goals, and became more open to cooperation with actors outside the movement environment. At the same time, the extra-parliamentary left developed a new understanding of militancy, and the use of violence remains a legitimate political tactic.

As part of a broader study on the similarities between the radical left in Poland and Sweden, Piotrowski and Wennerhag (2015) investigate activists’ ideas “about how political and social change can be best achieved” based on interviews conducted with activists in Stockholm and Malmö between 2008 and 2011. They find that Swedish activists “do conceive of themselves as being the primary ‘radical flank’ of the broader left” (Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015, p. 862). However, while the authors demonstrate that interactions between the radical and institutional left do occur, they also note that these interactions often lead to conflict as “the unspoken division of labor between left-wing politicians and the ‘radical flank’ does not seem to work” (Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015, p. 865). Piotrowski and Wennerhag (2015, p. 865) argue that these conflicts arise due to differing action logics, where political parties wish to remain respectable “within the arena of party politics... [while] the radical activists seek to distance themselves from the political mainstream and/or the political establishment in order to mobilize more people for grassroots actions.” The authors further find that extra-parliamentary leftists, while open to cooperation with institutional actors, still view direct action as their preferred means of producing social change.

Jämte et al. (2020) present a similar picture in their study on the collective identity of the contemporary radical left-libertarian movement in Sweden. The authors find that, within the movement, “countercultural elements seem to be playing a less central role and the movement instead self-identifies as a radical political actor seeking broad, inclusive, and locally grounded alliances” (Jämte et al., 2020, p. 29). This appears to stand in contrast to the findings discussed above in the German, Danish, and Spanish movements. Yet, the authors do argue that more weight is given to a shared worldview, within the movement, rather than a shared repertoire of action. Here, we see similarities to what Piotrowski and Wennerhag (2015) discuss as action logics. These two studies suggest that while the extra-parliamentary left continues to pursue cooperation with more institutional actors, problems continue to arise in these collaborations, due to differences in political understandings and goals.

Turning more towards the political context, Jämte and Ellefsen (2020a) explore the consequences of repression for the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden. They argue that the Swedish government and governmental authorities are engaged in practices of soft-repression against the extra-parliamentary left, where they have established “violence-affirming extremism as a social problem and a stigmatizing label in the Swedish public debate” (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, p. 385). Jämte and Ellefsen (2020a, p. 398) argue that the consequences of this soft repression “seem greatest” at the individual level, rather than the organizational or movement level, due to “the risks of being associated with the extremist label.” For individuals, the two major effects of this stigmatizing process are a “fear of social sanctions and self-policing” (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, p. 394). However, they also find some evidence that this repression has led to increased radicalization within the movement, as individuals identify more with the label of violence-affirming extremist.

Finally, two recent studies have focused on activism in Malmö. Christina Hansen’s (2019) dissertation builds on ethnographic field work in Malmö with leftist activist groups. Hansen (2019, p. 300), discussing the difference between charity and solidarity, finds that activists often account for their aid to migrants by emphasizing that “it is the political aim that matters.” In this way, activists motivate their engagement in acts which could be seen as charitable and focused on the individual, rather than as focused on structural problems. This greatly resembles the conclusions in Piotrowski and Wennerhag (2015) and Jämte et al. (2020), where each article points out how the extra-parliamentary left increasingly

engages in pragmatic acts but attempts to maintain an ideological focus. Hansen (2019, p. 460) also argues that “activists have created structures outside of formal institutions and neoliberal orders that may not be visible to outsiders but have a very real and material impact on those people involved in them.” Similar to the articles above, Hansen (2019) again finds that engagement in activism is an everyday activity, in which a specific group culture develops. Finally, Creasap (2016) focuses on place in her work on activist scenes in Malmö and Stockholm. She finds that the social movement scene in Malmö is comparably stronger than that in Stockholm, arguing that “a strong scene [in Malmö] was made possible by favorable structural conditions, tactical creativity on the part of the activists, and support from the locals” (Creasap, 2016, p. 804).

Let me now summarize this research and situate my study in relation to these previous findings. Previous research on groups like the extra-parliamentary left tends to emphasize the non-hierarchical nature of such groups, and highlight that individuals involved in these groups value participatory and direct political action. Activism is an everyday activity, integrated into the daily lives of activists, and the character of these groups and movement depends greatly on interactions with other political actors. In Sweden, the extra-parliamentary movement has increasingly sought alliances outside of the extra-parliamentary left, but retains a clear collective identity and worldview, which often leads to conflict in these collaborations. Furthermore, around 2010, the Swedish extra-parliamentary left turned away from global ideological battles and has since focused more on local conflicts, as part of a ‘turn to everyday life’. Despite signs of more tactical variation, direct action remains the most highly regarded political action within the extra-parliamentary left, and the use of violence continues to be a legitimate, if infrequent, tactic.

In this study, I build on many of these previous findings. However, in contrast to many of the studies above, and particularly the Swedish studies, an ethnographic method allows me to focus more on the everyday lives of extra-parliamentary leftists and the daily life of the group. I particularly extend Jämte and Ellefsen’s (2020a) work on stigma in the extra-parliamentary left, looking at how individuals manage and use stigma to construct their identities, and the collective identity of the extra-parliamentary left. In analyzing the actions of the extra-parliamentary left as *self-stigmatization* (Lipp, 1977), I demonstrate how the extra-parliamentary left must constantly achieve stigma, and how extra-parliamentary leftists use their knowledge of societal norms to gain political

influence. The studies further highlight the importance of context and interactions for groups like the extra-parliamentary left. In this study, I extend this focus on interactions further, focusing on intra-group interactions, and noting how the daily activities of extra-parliamentary leftists depend on these interactions. I further note how the existence of the group and the group's identity are dependent on successful interactions. Finally, I extend the previous research above through focusing on how individuals become involved in extra-parliamentary politics, examining the socialization process that leads individuals to identify as extra-parliamentary leftists. I also show how this socialization process continues to influence the actions and activities of the extra-parliamentary left today, extending our knowledge of how individuals come to be involved in radical political movements.

1.5 Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation thus proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I introduce and conceptualize a politics of community. I argue that a politics of community describes a distinct form of political action, focused on the attempted creation of *community spaces*. Community spaces arise in interaction, when individuals receive identity confirmation and confirm to each other that a community exists. Individuals feel at home in community spaces (Schutz, 1945), and community spaces are characterized by a sense of intimacy, shared goals, and commitment. Although I conceptualize a politics of community as a distinct form of political action, it resembles at times contentious politics, lifestyle politics, and prefigurative politics. Therefore, I discuss the similarities and differences between a politics of community and these political activities as well in Chapter 2. At times, a politics of community looks more like subcultural activity, and I thus also note its similarities and differences to the concepts of subculture, scene, and free space.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical perspective I adopt in this dissertation. I depart from a generally interactionist approach, with roots in pragmatism and phenomenology. To study interactions, I use a social world perspective (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978, 1982, 1993; Unruh, 1979, 1980) arguing that this perspective focuses our gaze on the everyday activities and interactions that create, maintain, and recreate the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Second, I introduce the pragmatist concept of habit, noting how habit allows us

to overcome the duality between thought and action, and focus on how routine action occurs. Third, I conceptualize stigma, arguing that stigmatization depends on power. However, I also discuss how individuals respond to stigma, focusing particularly on the response of self-stigmatization, and note that stigma is not always ascribed, but can instead be achieved (Mankoff, 1971). Fourth, I explore identity, and argue that identities are dependent on interactional processes, focusing on the processes of identity confirmation, identity interruption, and identity degradation. I also discuss how identities develop in interaction, concentrating on socialization and the role of significant others. Finally, the chapter closes in discussing the differences between a community and a group and examining how we come to feel at home in certain interactions through a conceptualization of community spaces.

In Chapter 4, I present the method through which I produced the empirical material this study is based upon. My methodological perspective departs from an idea of sociology based upon the work of Schutz, Mills, Smith, Blumer, and Berger. I argue that sociological studies must always depart from events, actions, and understandings based in the everyday world, with the goal of setting these actions in their societal and historical context. I contend that ethnography is a method particularly suited to the study of everyday interaction, based on participation in the social world of the participants. I then describe the specifics of my participation in this social world, as well as the interviews I have performed and documents I have analyzed in this project. The chapter closes in discussing ethical dilemmas inherent in ethnographic research as well as the importance of inviting the reader into a dialogue about the claims made in this dissertation, through exploring the role of reflexivity in ethnography.

In Chapter 5, I describe the historical and societal context of the extra-parliamentary left today. I begin in introducing the reader to the social democratic establishment of Sweden, noting that many of the understandings institutionalized in the establishment of the social democratic hegemony in Sweden continue to resonate today in the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. The chapter proceeds in describing the current political landscape in Sweden, noting that Swedish politics has shifted rightwards over the last 40 years. I then zoom in on the extra-parliamentary left, and present some important historical developments and events, focusing on those that continue to shape the actions of the extra-parliamentary left today. The chapter continues in briefly describing the city of Malmö and the area of Möllevången, where many of the events described

in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 take place. Finally, I close in detailing the state of the extra-parliamentary left today and looking at how the extra-parliamentary left defines itself.

Chapter 6 is the first analysis chapter of the dissertation. In Chapter 6, I focus on the first research question for the study, exploring the stigmatization and self-stigmatization of the extra-parliamentary left. I demonstrate that extra-parliamentary leftists are often aware and capable of adhering to the norms of action with Swedish society, which they view as social democratic, or *socialist*. When interacting with other political actors, such as LO, SAP, or the police, I show how extra-parliamentary leftists often engage in self-stigmatization. Through self-stigmatization, the extra-parliamentary left becomes a distinctive and recognizable community, which attempts to demonstrate the existence of another way of life. I also show how this distinctiveness is reliant on recognition from other actors in interaction. When this recognition does not occur, the extra-parliamentary left ceases to be a radical actor and instead becomes merely a conventional Swedish political actor. Thus, I argue that extra-parliamentary leftists often achieve stigma in interactions in broader political arenas as a means of distinguishing themselves from other political groups.

In Chapter 7, I explore the process of becoming an extra-parliamentary leftist. I show that the process often starts in primary socialization, as individuals grow up in environments characterized by the presence of significant others who have leftist habits. A leftist orientation becomes natural and taken-for-granted in this process. However, although individuals may be leftists, they often become extra-parliamentary leftists only after passing through orbiting social worlds, such as the punk scene or the youth group of a political party. In their participation in these activities, individuals encounter extra-parliamentary leftist habits, and begin to view the activities of the extra-parliamentary left as cool, fascinating, and attractive. As they develop these habits themselves, individuals chose to join the extra-parliamentary left due to a developing moral tension, the intrigues of this social world, and social ties. When individuals participate in the activities of the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, they begin to develop intimate relations with other extra-parliamentary leftists and become committed both to others in this world and the habits of the extra-parliamentary left, beginning to view the social world of the extra-parliamentary left as a home. In this chapter, I also explore the recruitment practices of the extra-parliamentary left, demonstrating that imagined potential members of the extra-parliamentary left

are young, subcultural individuals and consider this image in connection with the experiences of current extra-parliamentary leftists.

The final analysis chapter, Chapter 8, examines the constant recreation of extra-parliamentary politics and an extra-parliamentary leftist identity, addressing the dissertation's third research question. I demonstrate that the extra-parliamentary left engages in aggressive and relational self-segregation to create spaces where extra-parliamentary leftists can interact with each other. When this self-segregation succeeds, individuals can confirm in interaction not only their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists, but also the existence of the extra-parliamentary left. Extra-parliamentary leftists confirm that their habits are intersubjective in these interactions and take-for-granted that others have similar habits. However, when self-segregation fails, interactions are instead understood as taking place according to the logic of the surrounding Swedish society. In these cases, identity interruptions can occur, where individuals must find ways to address breaches in self-segregation and re-establish an extra-parliamentary community space. When individuals are interpreted as actively breaking the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left, a process of identity degradation can even occur, where individuals are publicly stripped of their identity as extra-parliamentary leftists. Through self-segregation, the extra-parliamentary left creates community spaces, enabling individuals to remain committed to the extra-parliamentary left and to each other. However, in this chapter, I also show the inherent fragility of these spaces, and note that they must constantly be recreated in interaction, where something can always go wrong.

In Chapter 9, I conclude. In this chapter, I first summarize the findings of the dissertation through a politics of community lens. Second, I consider the inherent instability of a politics of community and note some potential futures for the extra-parliamentary left, as both Swedish society and extra-parliamentary leftists change. The dissertation closes in returning to the concept of a politics of community and arguing that studies of political action should focus less on spectacular events and more on everyday action. I argue that in de-reifying categories of political action and instead returning to the study of the accomplishment of collective action, rather than merely its consequences, we can better understand not only new forms of political participation, but even the groups, movements, and activities that help to constantly change and recreate our societies.

2 A Politics of Community

The extra-parliamentary left engages in politics. Individuals within the extra-parliamentary left come together to engage in collective action, such as demonstrations, group meetings, and parties, and devote extensive amounts of time and resources to participating in something they call extra-parliamentary politics. Both individuals within and outside of the social world view the extra-parliamentary left as a radical, or deviant, political actor, and suggest that extra-parliamentary politics fundamentally differs from other types of political action (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020b). At least leading up to the onset of the global pandemic, this was a seemingly fairly stable social group, in spite of increased repression and stigmatization from Swedish governmental authorities (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a). The questions that arise revolve not only around how individuals are able to create and maintain lines of collective action, but why they devote so much of their time and energy to a form of politics that appears to have unreachable, utopic goals. However, classifying this form of politics, or political action, is difficult. Extra-parliamentary politics is not truly a form of contentious politics or prefigurative politics. At times, extra-parliamentary politics can even resemble subcultural activity more than political activity. Yet, it remains an inherently political activity, as purposeful, collective action directed towards challenging dominant societal structures, norms, and policies. Here, I argue that we must broaden our understanding of political action to conceptualize the activities and actions of the extra-parliamentary left. Extra-parliamentary politics is best conceptualized as a politics of community.

A politics of community describes a form of collective, political action based on shared goals, intimacy, and commitment. Within a politics of community, goals are not necessarily changing policies, convincing others, or inciting revolution (although these can all be side effects!), but instead the creation of community spaces, or interactions in which a feeling of community can be created. Community spaces are interactions in which individuals feel at home and where their identities as community members and the existence of the community

can be confirmed. A politics of community focuses on the role of everyday action and interaction in demonstrating worthiness and legitimacy, rather than episodic, public events. Political action is not directed towards elites or institutions, but instead towards the broader society, and towards displaying the existence of a distinctive way of life. Individuals engaged in a politics of community believe that social change occurs through this display of distinctiveness, rather than through purely instrumental action. Conflicts arise within a politics of community when individuals clash over proper representation of the community's habits, or when individuals interpret others as acting according to a different action logic, such as one that resembles more traditional political activity. A constant tension exists in this form of politics regarding stability and movement. When a politics of community becomes too static or inward-directed, it ceases to be political activity, and begins to resemble instead a subcultural activity. Yet, when it becomes too fluid, a politics of community instead begins to resemble contentious politics or prefigurative politics and turns rather into more traditional social movement activity.

In this chapter, I outline the major features of a politics of community. I begin in noting the similarities and differences between this form of politics and three forms of politics apparent in the social movement literature: contentious politics, lifestyle politics, and prefigurative politics. While a politics of community contains elements of these forms of political activity, it also differs in important respects from each. Next, I explore how community spaces relate to the concepts of scene (Creswell, 2021; Leach & Haunss, 2008) and free space (Polletta, 1999). Third, I discuss the subcultural elements inherent in a politics of community. Finally, this chapter closes in further explicating and clarifying the features of a politics of community, noting that while it contains traces of all of these different activities, when one element begins to dominate, the activity irrevocably changes from a type of politics centered on community to either a leisure activity or a more traditional form of political activity.

2.1 The Political Similarities: Contentious Politics, Prefigurative Politics, and Lifestyle Politics

2.1.1 Contentious Politics

The dominant approach to social movements today remains the contentious politics paradigm, despite recent turns to more consideration of culture. Contentious politics was developed mainly in the work of Charles Tilly and his collaborators, as an attempt to move away from a strict focus on movements to a focus on contention (Tarrow, 2015). McAdam et al. (2001, p. 5) define contentious politics as “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.” The focus of contentious politics revolves around claims-making, and claims, more broadly speaking. Success or failure is judged in reference to the ability of individuals and groups to realize their claims, and this goal motivates action. However, contentious politics recognizes that political action is relational, and thus the content of claims is always in development, depending on interaction with other political actors. Claims are understood as “the formulation of a political demand” while claims-making involves “the public staging of this demand”, and is “often referred to [as] the conscious articulation of political demands in the public sphere” (Lindekilde, 2013). Although theoretically one individual could engage in claims-making (and thus, contentious politics), claims-making usually involves an organized group of individuals working together to articulate a demand, or, in other words, a social movement.

It is here that we encounter our first problem with understanding extra-parliamentary politics as contentious politics. Namely, it is not overly clear or obvious what claim the extra-parliamentary left makes. On a very broad level, a demand for socialism exists within this social world. Yet, in many demonstrations, or other political actions, this claim fades into the background, as, for example, at the anti-fascist demonstrations with which I opened this dissertation. At times, however, it is easy to identify the claim. The most prominent example in this text is the ‘Strike Back’ campaign I discuss in Chapter 6, where individuals and groups engaged in a series of demonstrations aimed at forcing the Swedish government

to drop proposed changes to the right of Swedish workers to strike. In this case, the group made a clear claim, engaged in public political action, and addressed the government. However, it seems fundamentally absurd to define this as another form of politics for extra-parliamentary leftists when many of the same individuals attended the anti-fascist and Strike Back demonstrations for the same reasons. This is not to say that Strike Back could not be analyzed as contentious politics, but merely that while extra-parliamentary leftists engage in a form of politics that has similarities with contentious politics, understanding this type of politics requires something more. A politics of community can lead to contentious political action, but it remains a different category of politics.

A second, related issue with classifying the activities of the extra-parliamentary left as contentious politics regards contentious politics' focus on the state, and the public nature of action. As Snow (2004) argues, restricting our attention to political behavior directed towards the state eliminates many type of collective political behavior from consideration. In the case of the extra-parliamentary left, almost all activity individuals participate in within this social world would become non-political. Not only does this seem empirically problematic (e.g. can one study a political group that doesn't engage in politics?), it creates theoretical difficulties in terms of movements that direct their focus to international organizations, industry bodies, or religious organizations. Or, as in the case of the extra-parliamentary left, groups that direct their focus almost exclusively towards ideological structures (capitalism or the patriarchy to name two examples). This notation leads into the specific problems with viewing politics as manifestly public. It is in everyday activity and interaction that social structures are reproduced, challenged, maintained, and destroyed. As Kleinman and Cabaniss (2019, pp. 122, 120) note, "like all systems of inequality, patriarchy is continually lived out as people interact in patterned ways in everyday life" while "the big 'structures' of social life--patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, etc.—must be understood as rooted in the practices of everyday life." Attempts to challenge these 'big structures' in everyday life on the basis of reflexive, theoretical analysis plays an important role in extra-parliamentary politics. While this would not be included in contentious politics, it is included in the politics of community. Everyday interactions are more important than episodic, public interaction in a politics of community, enabling a group to maintain optimism, hope, and commitment even in the absence of public success.

Nonetheless, while a politics of community has a different focus and understanding of political action than contentious politics, several concepts related to contentious politics are important to understand a politics of community. Most prominently, the concepts of collective identity, repertoires, and opportunity structures, both political and discursive, remain relevant when considering this type of politics. As I noted above, the actor within contentious politics is often (although not always⁸) a social movement. Social movement is a famously difficult term to define. Here, there is neither space nor need to discuss the differences between various definitions⁹ (see e.g. Ring (2007) for an examination of different perspectives), but almost all definitions of social movement agree that social movements have collective identities. Collective identity has been defined in a number of ways within the social movement field. Taylor and Whittier (1992/1999, p. 170), for example, define collective identity as “the shared definition of a group that derives from member’s common interests, experiences, and solidarity” while Snow (2001, p. 3) argues that collective identity “is constituted by a shared and interactive sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘collective agency’.” In an attempt to refine the concept of collective identity, Polletta and Jasper (2001, p. 285) suggested that collective identity is “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities.” Some confusion around the term relates to whether it exists in the individual’s identity, or outside of the individual, as a marker of the movement. Flesher Fominaya (2010) argues part of this confusion arises from unclarity relating to whether collective identity refers to a process or a product (or both). She notes that “the ‘product’ definition [or] collective identity as something people outside the movement recognize and respond to...is fundamentally different from the ‘process’ definition that addresses an intra-movement phenomenon” (Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 397). In her later work, Flesher Fominaya (2018, p. 431) suggests that collective identity is both, arguing that collective identity “cannot exist unless individuals hold it within their self-

⁸ See e.g. Tarrow and Tilly (2007) for a longer discussion on the relation between contentious politics and social movements.

⁹ For the purposes here, a social movement can be defined as “collective action that challenges institutional authorities to redistribute resources, remake policy, or bestow social recognition” (Lichterman, 2021, p. 12).

conceptions. But unless it is expressed through action and interaction, it cannot be generated in the first place, nor can it be constructed, maintained, or developed over time.”

Collective identity, understood in this manner, plays a vital role in a politics of community. Collective identity entails not only a self-identification (i.e., I belong to this group), but it also involves a shared definition of a situation, shared ways of doing, and shared ways of representation. It involves a sense of togetherness, and a commitment to a group. Furthermore, collective identities are often noticeable to individuals outside the group. Markers of collective identity can make those involved in a politics of community recognizable as distinct from other groups in society. Within a politics of community, collective identity serves not only as a reason for acting together, but it also is a goal of acting together. Individuals act and interact to create a space where they can express themselves and feel at home, and where they can act according to the understandings, assumptions, and routines that align with their identity. Collective identity, then, implies that groups have routine ways of acting within a politics of community, or repertoires of action.

The idea of repertoires highlights the fact that social movements tend to use the same actions, tactics, and strategies over time, even regarding different claims. Some groups, for example, tend to hold demonstrations while other groups engage in civil disobedience or online campaigns. Tarrow and Tilly (2007, p. 441) define contentious repertoires as “arrays of performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors.” Repertoires are context dependent. The fact that a political activity is common in one place or time does not mean that it is common across all of time and space (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). For example, Eckstein (2013) demonstrates how repertoires in Latin America have changed in response to neo-liberalization, political regime change, and globalization while Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) note how the internet has increasingly changed how social movements operate. In a politics of community, repertoires still exist, but we must broaden the concept somewhat. Here, a repertoire of action refers not only to the public political activities of a group, but also the private, or community, political activities of group. In the case of the extra-parliamentary left, groups often need to raise funds in order to pay rent, hold a demonstration, or pay fines. By far the most common solution to this problem is to hold a ‘support party’, one of which I discuss and describe in Chapter 8. Here, the group usually uses a community-associated locale, invites

other members of the community, and sells merchandise and alcohol as a means of solving money problems. This is an action in the political repertoire of the extra-parliamentary left. Rather than restricting the concept of repertoire to solely public performances, as in the case of contentious politics, in a politics of community, a repertoire of action refers to the routine ways in which groups act to solve problems within and maintain the community. This includes not only actions like demonstrations or postering, but also activities such as support parties, barbeques, and group meetings.

The context-bound nature of repertoires leads to the final concept within contentious politics relevant to the politics of community, namely opportunity structures, both political and discursive. A political opportunity structures approach emphasizes “that movements’ ideas and practices are shaped by the movement’s political context, which can either promote or stifle collective action” (Jämte, 2017, p. 251). McAdam (1996, p. 27) highlights four dimensions of political opportunity: (1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; (2) the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; (3) the presence or absence of elite allies; and (4) the state’s capacity and propensity for repression. Wahlström and Peterson (2006, p. 365) add a fifth dimension, “the relative strength of the judiciary.” The major claim within a political opportunities approach notes that much of what limits or enhances the action of social movements occurs outside of the social movement, affecting mobilization, strategy, and even identity prospects (Meyer, 2004). The significance of the political context in which individuals engage in a politics of community should not be forgotten. State repression, changes in social policy, and elite capture, amongst other factors, all affect the prospects of community survival and reproduction. Repertoires can become outdated, causing individuals to lose faith in the habitual problem-solving routines within a politics of community, rendering the group too stable. Similarly, repression may render the survival of a community impossible, even in cases where the habits of the community have not become problematic. Political context matters.

The concept of discursive opportunity structures originates in the work of Koopmans and Statham (1999). They argue that a discursive opportunity structure determines “which ideas are considered ‘sensible’, which constructions of reality are seen as ‘realistic’, and which claims are held as ‘legitimate’ within a certain polity at a specific time” (Koopmans & Statham, 1999, p. 228). Thus, different understandings of reality and different collective identities have a better

or worse chance of acceptance depending on the surrounding societal context. However, McCammon, Muse, Newman, and Terrell (2007, p. 732) nuance the concept, and particularly highlight that “movement actors are agents who make decisions about how to respond to such opportunities” and that “to a significant extent, such opportunities are socially constructed.” In terms of a politics of community, here it is important to note the difference in audience between a politics of community and a traditional social movement. The audience is not the broader society or polity, in terms of identity. It is instead those involved in a politics of community—participants in the social world and neighboring social worlds. Ideas, analyses, and identities are limited and promoted in reference to the universe of discourse within a social world (Shibutani, 1955). Nonetheless, changes in repertoire and identity are limited through the perceptions of participants about what is reasonable or legitimate within a politics of community.

While a politics of community differs from contentious politics, most prominently in terms of audience and the type of political action it promotes, it nonetheless has some similarities. Collective identities remain vital within a politics of community, while groups engaged in a politics of community still have repertoires of action. Similarly, broader developments in the political arena strongly constrain or enable the opportunities for the success of a politics of community. If contentious politics focuses on public, collective action, two other forms of politics focus more on individual, private political action. I therefore now turn towards the similarities and differences between a politics of community, lifestyle politics, and prefigurative politics.

2.1.2 Lifestyle Politics

Although contentious politics (and its political process model) may remain the dominant way to study social movement activity, alternative approaches have increasingly become prevalent within the research field, particularly in regards to ‘awkward movements’ (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). Polletta (2006, p. 475) notes that awkward movements are those whose “composition, goals, or tactics make them difficult to study or theorize” and that they often seem conceptually “uncomfortably close to something else that is not a movement.” The extra-parliamentary left is one of these awkward movements. It resembles a social movement but does not truly qualify conceptually. However, there are many other groups and activities that present a similar problem, ranging from the veganism

movement (Cherry, 2015) to the practice of urban food cultivation (Dobernig & Stagl, 2015) to abstinence pledgers (Haenfler, 2019). Increasingly, the labels of lifestyle movements, to describe the group, and lifestyle politics, to describe the activity, have been used to classify these phenomenon (Bennett, 1998, 2004/2017; De Moor, 2017; Haenfler et al., 2012). The extra-parliamentary left, nonetheless, is not a lifestyle movement. At the same time, a politics of community has commonalities with lifestyle politics, such as the promotion of a lifestyle and the “politicization of everyday life choices” (De Moor, 2017, p. 181). However, a politics of community remains a form of collective, coordinated action, with explicit political goals in contrast to some forms of lifestyle politics.

Haenfler et al. (2012, p. 2) define lifestyle movements as groups “that consciously and actively promote a lifestyle, or way of life, as their primary means to foster social change.” Lifestyle movements view social change as arising “primarily via individual lifestyle change” (Haenfler et al., 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, the authors denote three main contrasts between lifestyle movements and political movements, arguing that “participation in [lifestyle movements] is (1) relatively individualized and private, (2) ongoing rather than episodic, and (3) aimed at changing cultural and economic practices rather than targeting the state” (Haenfler et al., 2012, p. 6). It is notable here that lifestyle movements are conceptualized as almost direct opposites to contentious social movements. A politics of community resides in the middle-ground between these two extremes. Similar to lifestyle movements, action within a politics of community is ongoing and primarily aimed at changing cultural and economic practices. However, it is not individualized or private. Rather, a politics of community argues that social change occurs when groups of individuals promote alternative ways of life together, showing alternate modes of living to be both possible and desirable. While individual actions create opportunity for social change in a politics of community, they only do so in reference to a collectivity (real or imagined).

De Moor (2017) distinguishes between six different ideal-typical categories of lifestyle politics. Of these six categories, a politics of community contains foremost elements of collective lifestyle change. Lifestyle change involves inward-directed behavior, either individually or collective. In each case, lifestyle change “advances societal change either by changing one’s own lifestyle, or as a collective that supports the conscious lifestyle choices of its adherents” (De Moor, 2017, p. 184). Within collective lifestyle change, De Moor (2017, p. 185) offers the example of

alternative food networks, which “foster social change by catering the morally or politically inspired lifestyle choices of its adherents.” Within a politics of community, we find organizations and networks that hold events or produce consumption opportunities for community adherents. These organizations allow for individuals to participate within the community, even if they, themselves, are not organized members. The yearly 1st of May demonstration I discuss in Chapter 8 serves as an example of this type of event. Yet, even here, we find slight differences between a politics of community and lifestyle politics. A politics of community emphasizes participation in contrast to consumption. Individuals acting according to a politics of community view themselves as responsible for creating frameworks and organizations that promote and maintain the values of the group. Furthermore, the primary audience for these organizations remains the individuals themselves and those in their periphery, rather than unknown adherents or the general public. Nonetheless, collective lifestyle changes play a role in the politics of community.

While lifestyle politics bears some similarities to a politics of community, primarily in its emphasis on maintaining or establishing a way of life, a politics of community is inherently collective in contrast to the more individualized political action within lifestyle politics. Individuals cannot engage in a politics of community on their own. They can only engage in a politics of community with others, as active participants in attempts to achieve social change. Social change, in a politics of community, arises through collective action. Nonetheless, just as lifestyle politics notes the importance of ongoing action, so too does a politics of community where everyday actions and interactions form the primary manner of political activity.

2.1.3 Prefigurative Politics

Finally, a politics of community also contains elements of prefigurative politics within it. Prefigurative politics, as a concept, lacks clarity. As Yates (2015, p. 2) notes, “it is often not clear if it is a tactic, orientation or way of doing protest, an alternative type of movement activity or a combination of these, and it is rarely apparent where distinctions with other types of political activity ought to be made.” Nonetheless, prefigurative politics has most often been used to study and describe various left-wing movements, usually anarchist, autonomous or syndicalist, such as Leach’s (2009) study on the German Autonom or Flesher

Fominaya's (2015) work on the Spanish autonomous movement (see Epstein (1991), Flesher Fominaya (2014), or Yates (2021) for longer overviews of movements to which the term has been applied). As I discussed in the introductory chapter, the extra-parliamentary left has much in common with these two movements, and at times even interacts and organizes events together with groups within the German movement. Initially, then, prefigurative politics appears a promising concept for describing the activities of the extra-parliamentary left. Yet, it is precisely the concept's lack of clarity that renders it use difficult for doing more than describing general political orientations within a movement. The extra-parliamentary left engages in prefigurative activities, unquestionably. Yet, I argue here that these prefigurative activities are best understood within the broader activity of a politics of community, rather than as the driving force behind the extra-parliamentary left's collective actions.

Prefigurative politics (or prefiguration) at the most basic level refers to an alignment between means and goals in a movement. Leach (2013b, p. 1004) defines prefigurative politics as "referring to a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs." She further notes that "a prefigurative approach seeks to create the new society "in the shell of the old" by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation" (Leach, 2013b, p. 1004). Yates (2015) nuances this conception of prefiguration in noting that in the scholarly literature, prefiguration tends to fall into one of two categories. It is "either a way of doing mobilization where the 'means reflect the ends'" as in, for example, direct action or participatory democracy, or "it involves an alternative or parallel project" (Yates, 2015, p. 4). Yates (2015, p. 13) advances the conceptualization of prefiguration in combining these two streams of thought, arguing that "prefiguration necessarily combines the experimental creating of 'alternatives' within either mobilization related or everyday activities, with attempts to ensure their future political relevance." One major issue in the literature on prefiguration is that debates about prefiguration often involve authors arguing for the usefulness of prefigurative movements in producing social change or in critiquing prefigurative politics for failing to effect change (Maekkelbergh, 2011; Polletta, 2005; Polletta & Hoban, 2016; Yates, 2021). Here, I make no normative comment on whether prefigurative politics is actually the most effective means of creating social change. However, I do argue that a politics of community shares a theory of change with prefigurative politics.

Within prefigurative politics, Maeckelbergh (2011, p. 16) argues that prefigurative activists pursue a strategy of social change “not by pointing out what is wrong with the existing [power] structures...but by actively setting up alternative structures so that people can *experience* for themselves what is possible and get actively involved” in maintaining and recreating these alternative structures. It is, in this sense, the existence of an alternative that matters—not necessarily what activists achieve in instrumental terms. Similar to prefigurative politics, in a politics of community, it is the community itself that is seen as the agent of social change. It is not individuals, groups, or even movements. For the extra-parliamentary left, it is not individuals who are responsible for growing the movement or recruiting new participants, it is rather the actions of the community (collectively) that demonstrate the possibility or promise of another manner of living. As I discuss in Chapter 7, members of the extra-parliamentary left do not see themselves as directly responsible for convincing others that change is needed. Rather, they argue that their public actions, where they represent the community, demonstrate to others that alternative social organizations are possible. Similarly, the continuing existence of the community maintains the possibility for outside individuals to have a space to seek alternatives when they eventually desire them. As I detail further in the next chapter, a community forms through repeated interaction in reference to a shared goal. It is therefore these interactions, with their accompanying feelings, understandings, and commitments that must be maintained, recreated, and protected within a politics of community. The community, to paraphrase Epstein (1991, p. 123), becomes the object of the politics.

In doing so, individuals unite means and ends. Reproducing the community reproduces the potential for change, in the case of the extra-parliamentary left. It is important to note here that although prefigurative politics requires the building of counterhegemonic or alternative ways of life, a politics of community does not. It is perfectly plausible that members of dominant groups may engage in a politics of community to maintain their structural position, seeing the continuation of their community as their main political activity. It is, in this sense, not necessarily future-oriented, but firmly anchored in the present activities of a group. Anecdotally, it was not uncommon growing up in the United States to hear suggestions that groups in various Middle Eastern countries were threatened by the American way of life. While this is almost certainly not the case, I would argue that some individuals who redoubled their commitment to the American ‘way of

living' engaged in a politics of community, seeing their way of life as their main means of political action within global politics. A politics of community shares a theory of change with prefigurative politics. Rather than individuals or movements creating change, individuals involved in this activity see communities as the main political actor, and do not need, necessarily, to orient themselves to some imagined future.

2.2 Community Spaces: Elements of Scenes and Free Spaces

2.2.1 Scenes

As I noted above, the primary goal within a politics of community involves the creation of what I term community spaces. Community spaces are relationships, interactions, and physical locations in which the existence of the community is confirmed and reconstructed. The creation of a community space is an ongoing accomplishment, always vulnerable to interruption. Community spaces enable individuals to feel at home (Schutz, 1945), bearing some resemblance to the cultural geographical concept of place (Merriman, 2009). In the extra-parliamentary left, as I discuss in Chapter 8, the political activities of individuals are often driven by attempts to create situations in which they feel at home and places where interactions can proceed smoothly according to an extra-parliamentary logic allowing identity confirmations to occur. These spaces are similar to the concepts of scene (Leach & Haunss, 2008) and free space (Polletta, 1999) but they differ in that they are more rooted in interaction and subjective experiences. Any interaction can lead to the creation of a community space. Interactions within recognized free spaces or scene spaces (meaning physical locations) may be more likely to lead to the creation of a community space as individuals in these spaces tend to assume that others share the same understandings, but it is the quality of interaction that determines whether a community space exists. In this sense, demonstrations often become community spaces, as individuals experience a feeling of euphoria and a recognition and legitimation of their identity. Yet, similarly, it is just as possible for an individual's romantic relationships to become community spaces, as identities and

understandings are confirmed in interaction. The accomplishment of community spaces enables the continuation of a politics of a community. Here, I further outline the features of community spaces in relation to its similarities and differences with scenes and free spaces.

The concept of scene tends to be used most prominently in relation to music creation, although there are recent attempts to extend the concept into the social movement field. For example, Straw (1991, p. 373), explicitly theorizing scene in contrast to community, writes that “a musical scene...is that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilizations.” Here, Straw appears to use scene merely as means of locating the activities associated with music. However, he goes on to note that the goal of the usage of scene is to examine “the ways in which musical practices ‘work’ to produce a sense of community within the conditions of metropolitan music scenes” (Straw, 1991, p. 373). It is precisely this sense of community that community spaces consist of. These community spaces, however, are located in a social world here. Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk (2006) extend the concept of scene to social movements, in their study of the white power music scene. They argue that the white power music scene contains “spaces (both physical and virtual) and activities [which] supply a range of options for interaction in which political, aesthetic, and stylistic interests reflecting movement goals are prominently expressed. Participants report that their experiences in the scene create powerful cognitive and emotional changes to a sense of self and commitment to the movement” (Futrell et al., 2006, p. 279). I strongly agree with these authors that spaces and activities where identities can be expressed in interaction are vital both for self-identification with and commitment to political activities, but I argue that it is the ongoing creation of these spaces and activities that matters. Activities and spaces are not stable or static. They do not exist, in their current form, without the ongoing participation of the community members. In essence, I wish to reverse the causality. In their participation and interactions, individuals create community spaces. Community spaces do not allow for individuals to participate, but participation allows for the existence of the spaces. The existence of community spaces cannot be taken-for-granted.

We see further examples of this use of scene as an organizing concept in the work of Leach and Haunss (2008), Creasap (2012, 2016), Kahn-Harris (2007), and Creswell (2021). Leach and Haunss (2008) deal specifically with the relation

between scenes and social movements. They define scenes as “simultaneously a network of people who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, norms, and convictions as well as a network of physical spaces where members of that group are known to congregate” (Leach & Haunss, 2008, p. 259). Leach and Haunss (2008) also explicitly separate the existence of a scene and the existence of a movement. Scenes are networks, in this description. Creswell (2021, p. 60), using Leach and Haunss’s definition argues that “this definition of scene helpfully delineates the object of study: networks that interconnect people and places.” Networks, clearly, are both a worthy object of study and a theoretically important concept, particular within a social world perspective. However, in this study, I focus on activities. The existence of scenes relies on the activity of creating community spaces. In a politics of community, however, we cannot separate the movement from the scene. The goal of groups engaged in a politics of community is the creation, maintenance, or recreation of what the authors above call a scene. It is the process of building a community space that a politics of community directs our focus too, raising questions around when community spaces come into being, when they cease to exist, and what conflicts surround these questions. As I detail in Chapter 8, while the extra-parliamentary left may succeed at times in creating extra-parliamentary spaces, these spaces are constantly vulnerable to interruptions from behaviors interrupted as outside the logic of the community. Within an interaction, spaces can shift from a community space to a non-community space and back. Again, we find this similarity in scenes, where Leach and Haunss (2008, p. 260) note that “neither the boundaries of a scene nor its membership criteria can be determined from the outside, because a scene is ultimately constituted through a face-to-face process of self-identification and mutual recognition.” It is this act of constitution that a politics of community focuses upon. Furthermore, in recognizing the creation of community spaces as an inherently political act, there is no distinction made here between scene and movement (or subculture). The creation of the community space is the political act, accompanying a prefigurative theory of change. Thus, while a scene may exist in relation to extra-parliamentary politics, it is specifically the accomplishment and experience of a scene that a politics of community focuses on, rather than the scene itself.

2.2.2 Free Spaces

Leach and Haunss (2008, p. 260), in their definition of scene, note that another manner of defining a scene is as “a network of free spaces that encompasses one or more subcultures.” The concept of free space or free spaces has often been used to study left-leaning social movement groups or organizations. In Polletta’s (1999, p. 1) overview of the literature on free spaces she notes that the term generally refers to “small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization.” In other words, free spaces are spaces in which countercultural or counterhegemonic groups can interact removed from the control of the reigning social order. Polletta identifies three different types of free space: transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative. Transmovement structures are “activist networks characterized by the reach of their ties geographically, organizationally, and temporally” while indigenous structures refer to free spaces that are “indigenous to a community and initially [are] not formally oppositional” (Polletta, 1999, pp. 9, 10). However, it is the third category of prefigurative free spaces that is initially most interesting here. Polletta (1999, p. 11) suggests that prefigurative spaces are those that “are explicitly political and oppositional (although their definition of ‘politics’ may encompass issues usually dismissed as cultural, personal, or private), they are formed to prefigure the society the movement is seeking to build by modeling relationships that differ from those characterizing mainstream society.” Clearly, prefigurative free spaces are where prefigurative politics happens. Polletta here even opens up for a more expansive definition of politics than social movement studies traditionally uses, in noting that politics in free spaces often includes ‘cultural’ or ‘personal’ elements. While Polletta’s typology is useful, subsequent research has argued that the distinctions between these categories are often blurred in practice. Futrell and Simi (2004, p. 21), for example, argue that “prefigurative practices in the [white power movement] cut across indigenous and transmovement spaces in ways not captured by the mutually exclusive categories that Polletta provides.”

A second criticism of this definition of free spaces arises in its relation to the explicitly oppositional and political nature of a space, most particularly in the work of Glass (2010). Glass (2010, p. 203) argues that everyday routines are “conspicuously absent from [most] conceptions”, despite the fact that “social movement groups are not constantly discussing who they are and strategizing

what to do and how to do it.” Rather, “collectives, communes, and other long-term movement spaces are filled with mundane issues, such as who cleans what and when as well as other problems related to organizational maintenance and survival” (Glass, 2010, pp. 202, 203). In the extra-parliamentary left, it is precisely interruptions in routine activities that create conflict and call into question the existence of the community. Although theoretical and strategic conflicts do exist, most conflicts instead relate to behaviors at meetings, practical difficulties in working together, or individuals’ perceptions of how others treat them. Similar to the Autonom Leach (2009) studies, there is not necessarily a clear ideology or identity that unites the extra-parliamentary left. Instead, it is concrete cooperation that unites the group, which involves very basic issues such as who makes the coffee, who gets to speak at a meeting, and how individuals treat each other at social events. Personal conflicts between individuals or groups in the community often create more difficulties for event planning than any particular tactical or ideological disagreement. Studying a politics of community directs our focus to these mundane or routine activities. The existence of community spaces depends on everyday routines proceeding smoothly. This creation of a community space is the goal of the action, rather than any far-off mobilization. As Glass (2010, p. 208) argues, “studies tend to give a rather static picture of free spaces...[where] a defining characteristic is how members dependably reproduce radical principles.”

Community spaces, conversely, direct our focus to fluidity, and the ongoing accomplishment of creation. Individuals may feel at home in a location at one point only to six months later feel uncomfortable in the same place. Community spaces are equally dependent on large ideological issues and everyday routines. In fact, in community spaces it is often ideological similarity that is unproblematically taken-for-granted, while everyday personal and social conflict destroys or renders problematic collective action. Furthermore, community spaces can arise anywhere, as they exist only in interaction. Certain locations are more likely to turn into community spaces (such as what we often term free spaces, or scenes more broadly speaking), but an interaction in a bar, at a party, or in the streets can lead to the creation of a community space. Furthermore, community spaces are valued in themselves. The creation of community spaces is the goal of a politics of community. It is not their use for the organization of demonstrations or launching of movements, but their very existence that is treated as success. Finally, community spaces do not need to be radical or counterhegemonic. Just

as dominant groups may engage in a politics of community, they too may attempt to create an ever-widening network of community spaces.

2.3 Community Political Life: The Subcultural Elements

Because a politics of community demands that we focus on activities that are not usually regarded as political, but instead more typically regarded as cultural or personal, it also contains elements usually regarded as subcultural. Conceptions of subculture vary widely (Fine & Kleinman, 1979; Gelder, 2007; Hannerz, 2015; Hodkinson, 2016; Williams, 2011). However, one aspect that unites various conceptions of subcultures is that they are usually not regarded as explicitly political. Studies of subculture may often discuss resistance, but this resistance seldom is theorized or regarded as a political act, with some notable exceptions (Leblanc, 1999). One exception to this is Haenfler's (2004, p. 431) study of the straight edge movement, where he argues that "although focused on personal methods of resistance, [straight edgers] understood their involvement in political terms as well." However, Haenfler (2004, p. 431) here argues that the activities only move from subcultural resistance to subcultural politics when a collective forms, engages in the given activities, and "advocates their choice... [opening] up possibilities for other youth." It is the advocacy that transforms an activity from purely subcultural to political for Haenfler. Action directed towards individuals outside the group, rather than only those inside the group, appears to be the distinguishing line between the subcultural and the political. I return to this point below. First, however, I examine the qualities which make an activity subcultural, or which characterize a subculture, as opposed to a political movement, serious leisure group, or lifestyle collective.

In attempting to examine the qualities that make an activity subcultural, we encounter an immediate problem. Namely, subcultures do not necessarily appear to do anything. Almost all definitions of subculture refer most particularly to what subcultures are, rather than what subcultures do. In this sense, it is the actor who matters in determining the status of the activity, rather than the action. For example, in his study of goths, Hodkinson (2002, p. 29) argues that subcultures can be identified according to their status in terms of "four indicative

criteria...identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness, and autonomy". Hodkinson refers to these as elements of cultural substance. Groups that are characterized by these four criteria are subcultures, in this conceptualization. Briefly, identity refers to "the extent to which participants hold a perception that they are involved in a distinct cultural grouping and share feelings of identity with one another" while commitment means "a tendency for concentrated and continuous practical involvement among participants" (Hodkinson, 2002, pp. 30, 31). Consistent distinctiveness is understood here as "the existence of a set of shared tastes and values which is distinctive from those of other groups" and autonomy, somewhat idiosyncratically, consists of the degree to which the group "while inevitably connected to the society and politico-economic system of which it is a part, retains a high level of autonomy" (Hodkinson, 2002, pp. 30, 32). Hodkinson mainly operationalizes autonomy as voluntary activity, as opposed to profit-driven activity, and activity that is mainly directed towards other subcultural participants as opposed to the broader society.

An overarching problem here refers to the lack of clarity regarding what culture means to Hodkinson. He notes, for example, in the conclusion of his study, that although "this grouping [goths] embodied elements of diversity and ephemerality, it was far more notable for traits which indicated greater levels of cultural substance" (Hodkinson, 2002, p. 195). In his later work, Hodkinson (2016, p. 634) argues that his use of cultural substance refers mainly to the fact that "some youth cultures retain striking collective features." Culture (and cultural substance) can perhaps then mainly be understood as things that a group has in common. In this case, subcultures are groups where the individuals share common understandings, common practices, and common values. Utilizing Hodkinson's definition, almost all revolutionary groups are subcultures. Revolutionary groups have distinctive features (ideology, perhaps most notably), individuals identify with each other, they are committed to the cause, and they are likely to some degree autonomous from the surrounding society (it is almost certainly voluntary action). However, it is this characteristic of autonomy that most differentiates revolutionary groups from subcultures. Although it is likely voluntary action in a revolutionary group, actions are not done solely for the group's own members, but to influence the broader society. There are attempts to change social organization. As I noted above in reference to Haenfler, resistance becomes political when it attempts to enact change. Individuals engaged in a politics of community want to convince others that their way of life is desirable and change

or maintain the social organization of a society. If autonomy is included as a characteristic of a subculture, then groups who engage in a politics of community are not subcultures. If, however, it is not, then they are subcultures.

The question of autonomy appears to separate definitions of subcultures into a broad and a narrow grouping. Two definitions based in symbolic interactionism open up for a broader understanding of subculture. Fine and Kleinman (1979, p. 9) argue that subcultures “are conceived of as emanating from group cultures” and that group cultures spread through social networks. Therefore, the “extent of the subculture consists in the boundaries of knowledge within the social network” and subcultures are “a set of understandings, behaviors, and artifacts used by particular groups and diffused through interlocking group networks” (Fine & Kleinman, 1979, pp. 9, 18). This is a very broad definition of subculture, that encompasses many groups not traditionally thought of as subcultures, such as little league baseball teams, as in Fine’s (1979) famous study. Furthermore, Fine and Kleinman emphasize interactions between the subculture and the surrounding society, noting that it is explicitly not autonomous, as individuals (almost) always belong to multiple groups and have ties to individuals involved in other areas of social life. Williams (2011, p. 39) defines subculture similarly, suggesting that subcultures “refer to culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects, and practices through interaction.” Utilizing either of these definitions, individuals involved in a politics of community are likely to form a subculture. Repeated interactions enable the creation of a set of shared understandings and behaviors that differ from other groups. A politics of community involves self-identification with others involved in the behavior, further suggesting that the group is a subculture.

However, if we turn to the second strand of definitions, we find a much narrower definition of subcultures. Haenfler (2016, p. 3), for example, defines a subculture as “a relatively diffuse social subgroup recognizable by its non-normative values, beliefs, symbols, and activities, as well as its marginalization from or resistance to ‘mainstream’ culture.” Subcultures here are defined in their deviance and their social position. It is not possible for a non-deviant group to be a subculture in contrast to the definitions above. In this sense, subculture acts more as a descriptive term for deviant or marginalized groups than as a descriptor of culture. Hannerz (2015), similarly, includes an idea of autonomy or distance in his definition of subculture or subcultural. Working in an Alexanderian and Durkheimian tradition, he specifically notes that “subcultures refer to a cultural

aspect: a shared system of meanings within which practices, styles, and identities are communicated and interpreted” (Hannerz, 2015, p. 102). Subculture, here, does not refer to a group but to a system of meaning. Acts become subcultural when individuals “enact the subcultural pattern that proceeds or is superimposed on the act” (Hannerz, 2015, p. 27). A subcultural system of meaning (rather than a cultural system of meaning) “refers to a contrastive dimension used to define and separate these representations from others” and “refers not so much to a subset of meaning within something larger, but rather as a defined subset of meaning that includes that which it opposes” (Hannerz, 2015, pp. 20, 23). Hannerz (2015, p. 27) further bases his definition of the subcultural in a system of binary codes, arguing that “subcultural representations are used to establish boundaries between real and fake along the binary subcultural/mainstream” and “that extensions of the subcultural binary are what distinguish the subcultural.”

In Hannerz’s work, it is somewhat unclear how this system of meaning relates to other systems of meaning (even if we accept an Alexanderian position). Nonetheless, it is clear that Hannerz sets apart a subcultural system of meaning from other systems of meanings, just as Haenfler and Hodkinson argue that subcultures exist apart from or outside of ‘mainstream’ culture. Groups that do not use a subcultural system of meaning cannot be subcultures, just as groups who are not deviant cannot be subcultures for Haenfler. Utilizing these definitions, groups involved in a politics of community are not necessarily subcultures. As I have noted, there is no particular reason to believe that only deviant or radical groups pursue a politics of community. Furthermore, as political action, involvement in a politics of community necessarily involves attempts to engage with the broader society. The extra-parliamentary left organizes demonstrations, campaigns, and events specifically directed towards other political and social groupings in society. Individuals desire a reaction and engagement from other parts of society. Groups involved in a politics of community are explicitly not autonomous from the wider society. As I explored above, the political opportunity structure within a society matters. Groups engage in actions that are not only directed towards other participants or towards maintaining the ‘purity’ of the community, but also in events that have an explicit purpose to ‘pollute’ the community, as in the party described at the beginning of Chapter 8, or the cooperation with the Left Party as described in Chapter 6. If autonomy is a vital characteristic of subcultures, then groups who engage in a politics of community are not subcultures.

Nonetheless, a politics of community does have some subcultural features. Groups engaged in a politics of community are distinguishable from other groups, as they promote a specific way of life, characterized by shared values, shared behaviors, and shared understandings. Similarly, individuals involved in a politics of community are committed to fellow participants, and engage in ongoing, continuous actions that demonstrate this commitment. Defined broadly, groups who engage in a politics of community are subcultures. However, a politics of community is not autonomous from the surrounding society, and thus, when defined narrowly, these behaviors are not subcultural, but explicitly political.

2.4 A Politics of Community

The extra-parliamentary left engages in a wide variety of behaviors and activities. Some of these activities resemble traditional social movement activity. Some resemble traditional subcultural activity. Yet, all of these varied types of activity combine together to create something that individuals call extra-parliamentary politics. Extra-parliamentary politics are done not only at demonstrations and other explicitly political actions, but in relationships, at parties, and in everyday life. Here, I have suggested that extra-parliamentary politics can be best understood as a politics of community. A politics of community contains elements of contentious politics, prefigurative politics, and subculture but also has important differences to these three forms of activity. It even resembles the concept of civic action (Lichterman, 2021; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014) but is both narrower in some respects and broader in others. Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014, p. 809) define civic action as action where “participants are coordinating action to improve some aspect of common life in society, as they imagine society.” A politics of community differs in two important respects. First, the main agent of change to actors involved in a politics of community is the community, rather than the actors. This is a slight, but important difference. In this sense, the goal of action relates to maintaining or upholding the existence of the community (however imagined) in order to improve society, rather than directly improving society. There is an extra-step in this process. Second, any activity that actors engage in to maintain or uphold the community falls into the category of a politics of community. In this manner, we avoid reifying either political action or civic action as categories, and instead note the flexibility of the different types of

action that might fall into a politics of community. Any action or interaction can belong to a politics of community. I thus now turn to the main features of a politics of community.

A politics of community describes a form of collective, political action. The main differentiation between a politics of community and subcultural activity regards the degree to which individuals motivate their action as maintaining, challenging, or changing societal organization. Societal organization is understood broadly here (including social, cultural, political, and economic features). Individuals cannot engage in a politics of community alone. It must be a form of collective, coordinated action where they act in concert with others.

A politics of community involves ongoing, continuous, everyday action. A politics of community does not only involve episodic and public collective action. Rather, the place to find a politics of community is everyday interaction, as individuals challenge social structures in routine activity. It is routine activity that often leads to conflict in a politics of community, rather than ideological or strategic struggle.

The goal of a politics of community is to build community spaces. The existence of a community can only be confirmed through the creation of community spaces. Community spaces are interactions where identities and understandings can be confirmed, legitimizing the ways of life of the group. The existence of community spaces enables individuals to continue to self-identify with the group and sanctions the behaviors of the group.

Groups engaged in a politics of community are distinctive and recognizable. Groups that engage in a politics of community must be recognizable as a group, distinct from other political groups. These distinctions can be made at a broad level (Americans) or a micro level (anarchists in Malmö) but individuals both within and outside the group must identify it as different from other groups. The reasons for difference can be style, ideology, or tactics, but in all cases, are related to collective identity.

A politics of community views social change as arising due to the existence and display of a community. Individuals engaged in a politics of community do not view social change as arising from individual action or individual events. Rather, the mere existence of a recognizable community has the potential to create social change. When other individuals, institutions, or groups recognize the community, they may be alternatively tempted to join, take steps to neutralize the attraction, or take counteraction, but they react to community's existence.

A politics of community is fluid. Finally, just as the existence of a group engaged in a politics of community forces others to react, a politics of community also changes as the surrounding society acts. Different strategies, tactics, and manners of building community spaces may be appropriate, while the type of interactions that create community spaces may also change. Communities should not be seen as reified. They are in constant change, and constant flux, with borders constantly shifting.

The activities of the extra-parliamentary left are best understood as a politics of community. However, to further understand a politics of community, we must also explore how a feeling of community arises, how identities are developed and maintained, and how behaviors become routine. Furthermore, as the extra-parliamentary left is a stigmatized group, we must also consider how stigma operates in identity construction, and how it influences the actions of stigmatized political groups. I therefore now turn towards an investigation of the concepts of social world, community, identity, habit, and stigma.

3 Theory: An Interactionist Approach to Community Action

In this chapter, I construct the theoretical approach I adopt throughout the dissertation. Analyzing a politics of community requires a theoretical perspective that focuses on everyday action and interaction. First, we must understand how and when a feeling of community arises—or why individuals feel at home in specific settings, events, and interactions. Second, I argued in the previous chapter that groups engaged in a politics of community not only have repertoires of action, but also a distinct and recognizable way of life. We therefore must also examine how actions and activities become routine or habitual. Third, I suggested that a politics of community involves both individual and collective identification. Thus, we must explore how individuals come to identify with a group, what this identification entails, and how individuals maintain, change, or lose identities in the course of social life. I also suggested that the societal context was vital for understanding the activities of groups involved in a politics of community. The extra-parliamentary left is a stigmatized group in Sweden (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, 2020b). Ergo, we must consider how the stigmatization process occurs, and what responses to attempted stigmatization individuals and groups can pursue.

To address these different processes, I depart from a general interactionist approach, with roots mainly in the pragmatist and phenomenological traditions. Seen generally, theory offers explanations for behavior and provides a means of understanding the world. Academic theorizing adheres to a different set of standards and needs to be internally consistent in a manner that common-sense theorizing does not (Schutz, 1953). Nonetheless, the difference between the two types of theorizing is a difference in content, rather than form. In both types of theorizing, we seek explanations about behavior and attempt to understand and explain the world. Our choice of theory, then, must be driven by this principle.

The theories that are best are those that provide the greatest insight into a certain phenomenon. In the end, it is up to the researcher (me, in this case) to demonstrate that I have chosen the theoretical vocabulary and perspective that is “best adapted to the task and then to convince [my] colleagues that [I] made the right choice” (Callon, 1984, p. 200). As I will argue and attempt to demonstrate, an interactionist perspective provides the most insight into the group life of the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden, and other groups engaged in a politics of community. Just as a politics of community focuses on everyday activities and actions, interactionism emphasizes the continuous creation of social order and structure, reminding us about the fluidity and indeterminacy of social action.

I start here from the basic interactionist insight that human action is inherently social. As Dewey (1927/2016, pp. 83-84) argues, “conjoint, combined, associated action is a universal trait of the behavior of things.” In this sense, it is no accomplishment that individual humans come together to form groups, but rather an abiding and fundamental feature of human life. Action therefore necessarily implies interaction. Blumer (1969, p. 7) further emphasizes this point, pointing out that “a society consist of individuals interacting with one another.” Interactions are not only what create society, but it is also through interaction that other features we tend to associate with society, such as norms, structures, and roles, are created, reproduced, challenged, or dissolved. As Kleinman and Cabaniss (2019, p. 122) write, “all systems of inequality...[are] continually lived out as people interact in patterned ways in everyday life.” Human life, and therefore life in groups, is a never-ending series of interactions through which we continuously re-create what we then call the group, the community, or the society. However, as Kleinman and Cabaniss point out, interactions are patterned. Strauss (1993, p. 25) further emphasizes this point, arguing “even face-to-face interaction between two actors is unlikely just to involve the two actors but also what they bring into the situation by way of respective interaction histories, imageries, and meanings.” Interactions are embedded in specific contexts, with specific histories and patterns of meaning. The role of meaning is fundamental in an interactionist approach.

Blumer (1969, pp. 2-3) in his text on the basic tenets of a symbolic interactionist approach, argues that “the meanings things have for human beings are central in their own right” and “that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them.” He continues in arguing that symbolic interactionism “sees meaning arising in the process of interaction

between two people” (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). Meaning, in the pragmatic tradition, arises when things are “used in a shared experience or joint action” (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 19). The meaning of a thing or object becomes “the common response in one’s self as well as in the other person, which becomes, in turn a stimulus to one’s self” (Mead, 1934, pp. 73-74). At this point, it is vital to note that a pragmatist or interactionist theory does not turn into a theory of stimulus-response but retains elements of constrained agency and creativity. However, I return to this issue below in the section on habit, rather than here. In Mead’s analysis of interaction, he separates interaction into interactions based on gestures and interactions based on significant symbols, or symbolic interaction. Interaction becomes symbolic, as Blumer (1969, p. 8) notes, when interactions “involve interpretation of the action.” The interactions analyzed in this dissertation are all “profoundly symbolic” (Strauss, 1993, p. 151). In other words, as Strauss (1993, p. 151) argues, “interactions for human beings involve some form of language: including sign language, meaningful gestures, use of icons and insignia, or other signs and symbols standing for meanings.” At a demonstration, a masked protestor calls out certain responses in other groups. In other words, the mask, or the masked protestor, has meaning. To the police, it suggests one set of responses, while to fellow demonstrators it may suggest another, but in either case, each group interprets the action of the individuals wearing a mask and responds to it based on the meaning they assign to it. It is likely again important to emphasize that each group retains a sense of agency and non-determinacy, but again I return to this below.

Blumer (1969, p. 5, emphasis original) continues his introduction to symbolic interactionism in arguing that “the use of meanings by the actor occurs through a *process of interpretation*.” It is this that leads us to the second major assumption I base this theoretical perspective upon, namely that human life is intersubjective. As Schutz (1970b, p. 73) argues, “the world is from the outset not the private world of the single individual, but an intersubjective world, common to all of us.” Meanings are inherently social or shared. As both Schutz and Mead make clear, it is only through taking the role of the other that we can understand what they mean, and what our own actions and gestures mean. We learn what things mean, as we are born into a specific group or society. Schutz discusses this as objective meaning. He argues that we “live *within* the meaning-endowing acts themselves and [are] aware only of the objectivity constituted in them, i.e. objective meaning”

(Schutz, 1967, p. 36, emphasis original). In Schutz's work, objective meaning¹⁰ concerns meanings that are shared amongst us, such that we understand certain acts, words, or signs without reference to the speaker or doer. For example, the word dog likely means the same thing to all of us—there is very little subjective, or individual, content in the use of the word¹¹. The key aspect here is that this means that “everything which is distinctly human is learned” (Dewey, 1927/2016, p. 180). This means that as we learn to be human, we learn how to interpret the meanings of symbols, and we thus learn what the appropriate responses to certain acts or gestures are.

A further corollary to this statement arises. The idea that meaning is learned necessarily implies that it is learned through communication. Dewey (1916/1966, p. 5, emphasis original) goes even further arguing that not only does society “continue to exist...*by* communication” but that it only exists “*in* communication.” However, as Mead (1934, p. 257) point out, “you have to presuppose some sort of co-operation within which the individuals are actively involved as the only possible basis for this participation in communication.” To study meanings, interpretations, and actions, we need a means of locating the cooperation in which the individuals are actively engaged. In this dissertation, I use the concepts of arena and social world to locate this cooperation.

3.1 Arenas and Social Worlds

Without interaction, there is no possibility for the creation of shared meaning. We thus need a means of conceptualizing where and how interactions take place. Here, I rely primarily on the related concepts of arena (Demetriou, Alimi, & Bosi, forthcoming; Strauss, 1993) and social world (Becker, 1974, 1976; Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1980). Demetriou et al. (forthcoming) argue that arenas are “an imagery with which to approach the study of social movements” or “a preliminary conceptual scheme through which one sees the empirical world.”

¹⁰ This is significantly more complicated in Schutz's work, but I believe this summary to be faithful to his points. See specifically pp. 31-38 and Chapter 3 in Schutz (1967). He also discusses this understanding in Schutz (1953).

¹¹ This is notably not true for small children and goes some way to demonstrating why meaning originates in community, rather than individual acts. See Bergson (1911/1998, p. 158).

They further argue that the use of arena implies “two overarching commitments: that these arenas are realms of social interaction...and that they are to be considered comprehensively” (Demetriou et al., forthcoming). Arena, in this sense, is merely a site where social interactions take place. We can, for example, speak then of the Parliamentary arena, where parliamentary parties interact and attempt to achieve their goals. Furthermore, arenas are connected. What occurs in one arena affects what happens in other arenas, regardless of whether the participants in a given arena are involved in it. For example, if the Left Party (VP) were to become the ruling party in the parliamentary arena in Sweden, this would entirely change the manner of interaction in the arenas which involve the extra-parliamentary left, despite individuals in the extra-parliamentary left largely remaining outside this arena.

If we turn to the more pragmatist and symbolic interactionist work of Becker and Strauss, we can further nuance this conceptualization of arena in relation to the concept of social world. Becker (1976, p. 703) defines a social world “as consisting of all those people and organizations whose activity is necessary to produce the kind of events and objects which that world characteristically produces.” Strauss (1978, p. 122, emphasis original) similarly argues that “in each social world, at least one primary *activity* (along with related clusters of activity) is strikingly evident.” Taken together, each author suggests that it is to activities that we should direct our focus. Yet, in focusing on the interactions necessary for an activity to take place, each reminds us “we need always to ask exactly who is joining together to produce what events” (Becker, 1976, p. 705). Analytically, the activity that characterizes the social world of the extra-parliamentary left is extra-parliamentary politics. This includes demonstrations, violent or otherwise, but also for individuals in the extra-parliamentary left, relationships, friendships, and career choices. The crucial point here is that extra-parliamentary politics necessarily involves individuals who are not extra-parliamentary leftists. Even in the case of a demonstration, on a very simple level, the sound car at the front of a demonstration was not produced by an extra-parliamentary leftist. On a slightly more complicated level, as I discuss in Chapter 8, once individuals decided to apply for a demonstration permit for the 1st of May demonstration, a non-extra-parliamentary leftist had to grant the permit.

The vital aspect here is that the social world of extra-parliamentary politics is not the same as the group of individuals who identify as extra-parliamentary leftists. As Strauss (1978, p. 123) points out, “at first blush, anyone who is in a

world...is associated with its activities. But some are thought to be (or think of themselves as being) more authentically of that world, more representative of it.” Unruh (1980) for example, identifies four different types of social involvement in a social world: strangers, tourists, regulars, and insiders. Neither strangers nor tourists display any commitment towards or identification with a social world. However, both regulars and insiders are committed to the social world. In Strauss’s terms, it is regulars and insiders who are thought to authentically belong to a social world. Strauss (1978, p. 123, emphasis original) argues further that “*authenticity* seems to pertain to the quality of action as well as to judgements of which acts are more essential.” As I discuss further below, it is precisely these authentication, or identification, processes, that allow individuals to form the community of the extra-parliamentary left. It is through authentication that acts and individuals become extra-parliamentary leftist.

However, both Strauss and Becker are concerned to point out that social worlds are not fixed or deterministic. Strauss (1978, p. 123), for example, notes “the social world perspective yields the usual interactionist vision of a universe often bafflingly amorphous.” Social worlds seldom have clear boundaries or borders. The borders of a social world “are set neither by territory nor by formal group membership, but by the limits of effective communication” (Shibutani, 1955, p. 566). Strauss (1993, p. 214) offers the following defense of the lack of clear boundaries in this perspective, through noting that a common criticism is that “all social units must be bounded. Furthermore, if not, then they are not worthy of or possible to study.” He suggests, instead, that “the first attribution is nonsensical, and the second is an empirical question, not a matter for dogmatism” (Strauss, 1993, p. 214). Rather than viewing the lack of clear boundaries as a weakness, it is a strength of the concept of social world. We remain, in this sense, focused on process rather than state, with interactions constantly recreating, shifting, and disintegrating the edges of any given social world.

It is here that we arrive back at arena as a site of interaction. For Strauss, arenas are places where social worlds interact (sometimes in the form of individuals, and sometimes in the form of organizations or groups). Strauss (1993, p. 227) writes that “arena action around issues ultimately signifies disagreement about directions of action.” Issue, in this sense, refers essentially to its dictionary definition, “a vital or unsettled matter” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). In arenas, “various issues are debated, negotiated, fought out, forced, and manipulated by representatives of implicated subworlds” (Strauss, 1978, p. 124). Arenas tend to arise when habits

(see below) or patterns of collective action become problematic. However, within arenas, “discussants do not always agree even on the formulation of an issue—or that there is an issue” (Strauss, 1993, p. 226). For example, in interactions between extra-parliamentary leftists and the police, it is extremely likely that the two groups do not agree on what the issue at stake is. Similarly, as I discuss in Chapter 6, individuals in VP and individuals in the extra-parliamentary left have different notions of relevant political actions and organizations. Yet, it does not appear as though VP members agree that there is an issue in their interaction and cooperation with extra-parliamentary leftists. Arena, therefore, merely refers to sites where representatives of different social worlds interact.

However, in discussing the arena where interactions between VP representatives and extra-parliamentary representatives occur, a final point in relation to social worlds and arenas becomes clear. Namely, social worlds are in a constant process of *segmentation*. In essence, we could suggest that VP and the extra-parliamentary left work together to produce what they call leftist politics. They, thus, would belong to the same social world. These two groups, or the activities of these two groups, would belong merely to different segments of the same social world. As Strauss (1978, p. 123) notes, “most [social worlds] seem to dissolve, when scrutinized, into congeries of subworlds.” This is true for the social world of leftist politics, as well as for the social world of extra-parliamentary politics. However, even the social world of leftist politics could instead be studied as a subworld of Swedish politics (Ditton, Loomis, & Choi, 1992). Nonetheless, I view this as unproblematic. This thesis focuses extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Yet, it does remind us that social worlds are nested, and in a constant process of differentiation. Groups are constantly “emerging..., evolving, developing, splintering, disintegrating, or piling themselves together” within social worlds (Strauss, 1982, p. 172). We should, therefore, not expect a social world to be conflict free, or in a sense, free of arenas. This is particularly relevant in terms of Chapter 8, where I examine the creation of community spaces. Analytically, the question revolves around authentication processes, and when segmentation processes create separate or multiple social worlds.

When individuals participate in a social world, they come to “internalize” the “perspectives shared in a group” (Shibutani, 1955, p. 565). Shibutani (1955, p. 565) further highlights that “variations in outlook arise through differential contact and association...[leading] to the formation of distinct cultures. Thus,

people in different social classes develop different modes of life and outlook.” Participation in different social worlds leads to the learning of different meanings, recipes of action (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973), and identities. In this dissertation, I will refer to these ‘modes of life and outlook’ as *habits*.

3.2 Habits as Ways of Life

I argue that individuals learn to be extra-parliamentary leftists, and learn the meanings and responses associated with this identity through involvement in extra-parliamentary politics. I refer to the meanings, responses, and actions associated with extra-parliamentary politics as *habits*. Above, I argued that interactions are patterned, and that to each interaction, individuals bring a specific history. In other words, interactions proceed differently in different contexts. Different groups have different goals, different meanings, and different forms of interaction. However, because we must learn to be human, and subsequently learn to be a member of each new group we join, we must learn the behaviors and meanings at work within each specific group. We must, then, learn the habits of different groups. Habit, as I will use it in this dissertation, encompasses shared, routine ways of acting, understanding, and judging. In this section, I begin in briefly outlining the pragmatist concept of habit, and present how I use it analytically. However, as I mentioned above, a vital element of pragmatism regards its focus on human creativity and agency. In the second part of this section, I therefore examine the link between habit and creativity, through a discussion of institutionalization and the taken-for-granted nature of social reality.

In his writings on habit, William James (1890/1997) argues that habit is the single most important aspect of social existence. He writes:

Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter, it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin, and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make

the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted and it is too late to begin again.

(James, 1890/1997, p. 65)

While this citation bears the obvious marks of its time, it is in some sense remarkable how modern James's writing feels. James, in this quote, views habit both as vital to the construction of human society, but also as somewhat tragic. Habit, here, is naturally conservative and 'dooms us' to follow our earlier paths of activity, regardless of their suitability, or perhaps, their rationality. Habit, in pragmatism, is what allows interactions to proceed smoothly. However, habit is more than merely a way of acting or interacting, it encompasses thought, feeling, and knowledge as well. In this sense, it overcomes the duality between thought and action, and bridges this divide. As Crossley (2013, p. 150) puts it, "habit is knowledge and understanding." He goes further, arguing that "understanding is not an event lying behind or preceding our capacity to do certain sorts of things...it consists in our capacity to do those things" (Crossley, 2013, p. 149). Understanding is active, understanding consists in our capacity to do something. Dewey, along these lines, emphasizes the difference between habit and habituation. He defines habit as "an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends" (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 55). Habituation, conversely, means to "get used to our surroundings" (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 55). Habits then are forms of action. They are "orderly and established ways of action because they generate ease, skill and interest in things" (Dewey, 1927/2016, p. 185). Habits, in this sense, are patterns of action. However, because we act on the basis of interpretation of meanings, habits are also patterns of interpretation.

However, as both Dewey and James make clear, specific actions are not habits. Instead, "the essence of habit is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response, not to particular acts" (Dewey, 1922, p. 42). Similarly, when speaking of emotion, James argues that emotional habits are "general forms of discharge, that seem to be grooved out of habit in the brain" (James, 1890/1997, p. 67). In this sense, habits do not determine specifically what will happen in a situation¹². They, however, determine the general lines along which we will act and think. If, for example, individuals often react angrily in situations, they may express this anger differently in different interactions, but we could still suggest that they have

¹² This bears a clear similarity to Mead's I and Me.

a habit of anger. Or, in terms of the extra-parliamentary left, I argue that there is a habit of demonstrating and demonstrations within this community. However, this does not mean that all demonstrations will look the same, merely that holding a demonstration is a common political tactic within this group. Habit, in this sense, merely means the routine actions of a group. It means that lines of action do not need to be re-invented constantly, and that individuals can expect others to act in a certain manner. Becker, in his analysis of art worlds, uses the term conventions. He notes that “people who cooperate to produce a work of art usually do not decide things afresh. Instead they rely on...agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things” (Becker, 1974, p. 770). Habit is the conventional way of doing things.

As Strauss (1993, p. 195) argues, most habits or routines “are responses to problems.” Schutz (1964) helps to clarify the role of habits in different groups, in his discussion of relevances and typifications. He argues that individuals experience the world “from the outset in terms of types” (Schutz, 1964, p. 233). We typify individuals, experiences, and actions constantly. In Schutz’s perspective, we can only understand unique experiences in terms of their type. However, we must learn to typify—it is an element of learning to become human. Schutz (1964, p. 236) argues that “in the social world as taken for granted, however, we find...a socially approved system of typifications called the ways of life of the in-group.” He continues in suggesting that the ways of life of the in-group, or in other words, the habits of the group, originate in “a world of a common situation within which common problems emerge within a common horizon” which has “problems requiring typical solutions by typical means for bringing about typical ends” (Schutz, 1964, p. 236). Schutz refers to this as a system of typifications and relevances. Relevances, in this use, refer to the aspects of a typification that are relevant. For example, when we attempt to identify a demonstration, we may suggest that the clothing of the individuals involved in the action is relevant, while the cause is not. Or, alternatively, we may argue that it is the cause that is relevant in determining whether something is a demonstration, while the clothing of the individuals is not. This shared system of understanding enables individuals to arrive at a joint definition, or interpretation, of a situation.

However, pragmatism, and interactionism more generally, is a philosophy of change and contingency. Habits are therefore always in the process of change, and always must be reconstructed. As Dewey (1922, p. 95) puts it, “human society is

always starting afresh. It is always a process of renewing, and it endures only because of renewal.” Interactions can always become problematic. New situations can always occur, for which we have no habits, while similarly, as Blumer (1969, p. 18) argues, “even in the case of pre-established and repetitive joint action each instance of such joint action has to be formed anew.” Things can always go wrong in interaction. We can learn that our habits are incorrect or that they are not shared. We may have misinterpreted, or defined wrongly, a situation or the other individuals involved in an interaction. Yet, as Garfinkel (1967) makes clear in his breaching experiments, everyday interaction tends to proceed smoothly. We take-for-granted that the other individuals within an interaction, and especially within our group, share the same habits of acting and understanding that we have. They share the meanings we assign to symbols. Language is the most obvious example of this. If we assumed that words had different meanings to all of us and had to come to a new agreement about the meaning of specific words in every interaction, social life would be a hopeless mess¹³ (it also would be utterly impossible to write a dissertation). However, we instead take-for-granted that those who belong to our language group will understand us if we use words in what we think is the conventional way. This, then, can be extended to action. When we act habitually, we take-for-granted that the others around us will interpret our actions in line with the habits at work within the group and respond to us on the basis of those meanings.

Analytically, the question then revolves around discovering and understanding the habits at work within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. As a group, there will be specific ways of acting and understanding at work, and individuals will act and interact in reference to these habits. Understanding the behavior of individuals therefore requires understanding the habits of the group. Furthermore, it also requires looking into the process in which habits are created, what they are created in response to, and how they become problematic. Yet, as individuals do not act solely on the basis of habit, but retain agency and creativity, I now turn towards a discussion of the taken-for-granted nature of social reality and processes of institutionalization or deinstitutionalization.

Habits are constantly being created, re-created, changed, and discarded in the process of interaction. They are taken-for-granted to a greater or lesser degree,

¹³ The example of two people attempting to speak a second language to each other may also help to clarify this point.

depending on the group and context we find ourselves in. However, in many contexts, habits “frequently get hardened, at least for a time, into rules and regulations” (Strauss, 1993, p. 195). In any group, there are certain rules which we must observe if we wish to continue interacting within the group. I, for the moment, ignore the legal aspects of this, which I return to below in the discussion on stigma. Here, I instead focus on what Ellickson (1994) calls order without law. Rules and regulations are one clear example of institutionalized habits within groups. Institutionalized habits are lines of interpretation and action which “are those social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating social processes” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145). Or as P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 75) put it, “life...is now defined by a widening sphere of taken-for-granted routines.” It is in this sense that we can speak of habits as institutionalized— they are shared, routine patterns of courses of interaction and interpretation which we follow on a taken-for-granted basis. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 8, the structure of meetings in the extra-parliamentary left is institutionalized to a large extent. Meetings should have a specific form, and individuals should behave in a specific manner. There should, for example, be an agenda and a protocol from the meeting, and that should be available to all group members. This is institutionalized not only in the sense that it often is written in the by-laws of groups, but also in the sense that it is taken-for-granted that this is how meetings should be done.

When we act on the basis of taken-for-granted habits, Schutz argues that we engage in thinking as usual. Schutz suggests that four assumptions must be maintained to continue thinking as usual. These are:

1. Life will continue to be the same as before
2. We may rely on the knowledge handed down to us by the community
3. “In the ordinary course of affairs it is sufficient to know something about the general type or style of events we may encounter in our life-world in order to manage or control them”
4. That our systems of meaning are intersubjective.

Adapted from Schutz (1944, p. 502)

When these assumptions are not met, or fail to function, Schutz argues that individuals are jolted from the natural attitude (see Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, pp. 3-8) and forced to instead to define each act, person, or object anew. A (likely infinite) number of situations can arise in which institutionalized habits become problematic. New problems can arise within the social group, external shocks can occur due to the result of interactions in other arenas or social worlds, or habits can simply no longer fulfil their stated goals due to other changes in social life (Dewey, for example, identifies the development of capitalism as rendering a range of habits obsolete). Similarly, we may also encounter individuals who do not share our system of interpretation, and discover that our habits are not intersubjective, as this individual does not belong to our group, social world, or community. In these cases, we must find other solutions to achieve our goals, or to allow an interaction to proceed smoothly. While I discuss this further in the section on identity below, here, I wish to emphasize that new solutions, or new habits, are always connected to our already existing habits. Blumer (1969, p. 20) notes that solutions arise “out of a background of previous actions of the participants...the participants involved in the formation of new joint action always bring to that formation the world of objects, the sets of meanings, and the schemes of interpretation they already possess.” James (1907/1997b, p. 101) makes a similar observation in arguing that we always attempt “to preserve the older stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leave possible.” New solutions to problems and new lines of action arise out of the background of previously unproblematic, learned habits.

It is these notions surrounding habit that prevent habit from becoming deterministic. Social life is never fully institutionalized or taken-for-granted. As P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 98) write “neither the model of institutional totality nor its modification can be found in history.” Society is a never-ending series of new situations and new interactions. Groups (and individuals) develop ways to solve problems and achieve desired ends. However, as Schutz’s discussion on typification makes clear, no two unique situations are actually the same. Bergson (1911/1998, p. 5) similarly notes that “from this survival of the past it follows that consciousness cannot go through the same state twice.” Thus, habits are in a constant process of modification, as we encounter new experiences, situations, and interactions, and are adjusted on the basis of our interpretations of these experiences. Strauss goes further, arguing that without

habits, or standardization, there would in fact be no room for creative action. He argues that creative action is “the making of a successful solution to a problem...that additionally results in very major changes in collective perception, values, and action” (Strauss, 1993, p. 200). As Strauss notes, one can only come up with a new solution to a common problem if one is aware of the common solution. The common solution, however, becomes problematic, and individuals act to find a new creative way of solving a problem. Creativity is always embedded within habitual action. This again returns us to the idea that interactions, groups, and habits are always contextual. To understand even new actions, we must understand the habits at work within a given social world, and the common ways of understanding and acting.

I therefore use habits in this dissertation as a means of discussing the routine, shared ways of interpreting and acting at work within the group of the extra-parliamentary left, and other groups such as leftists in Sweden. These are inherently contextual because habits arise in the specific social world of extra-parliamentary politics within the broader Swedish political arena. Furthermore, habits are processual and interactional. It is in interaction that habits are created, recreated, or discarded, as we check that others share the same meanings as we do. Extra-parliamentary leftists act in a certain manner, think certain things, and interpret politics in specific ways. As I explore in Chapter 6, these habits are often stigmatized within the broader Swedish political arena. Nonetheless, as I highlight in Chapter 8, within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, when individuals are interpreted as not acting in reference to the habits of the community, conflicts arise surrounding the correct way to interpret or act. However, when interactions proceed smoothly, it is because individuals are interpreted as acting habitually, or in line with the shared meanings of the group. Nonetheless, the social world of the extra-parliamentary left does not only have internal conflicts, but it also engages in arena action—with the police, VP, and the Social Democratic Party (SAP) primarily. I therefore now turn towards the question of stigma, which characterizes these arena actions.

3.3 Stigmatization and Self-Stigmatization

As I have highlighted throughout the opening chapters of this dissertation, the extra-parliamentary left is a stigmatized group in Swedish society. In this section, I conceptualize what this means in sociological terms. Stigma, or stigmatization, always relates to identity and identity processes. I conceptualize stigma as essentially the inverse of the authentication processes discussed above. In these authentication processes, individuals or groups come to be seen (by themselves and others) as representative of a given social world. Stigmatization, then, involves a process in which individuals or groups are disqualified from representation. To put this another way, rather than having their activities be seen as representative of a given social world, they are instead seen as not belonging to that social world. However, social actors are not passive participants in this process of disqualification. Instead, they have a variety of options in response to attempts at stigmatization. The extra-parliamentary left usually pursues a strategy of self-stigmatization as a means of managing and dealing with stigma. Thus, in this section, I investigate both the process of stigmatization, and common responses, with a focus on self-stigmatization.

There exist an extensive variety of definitions and conceptualizations of stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001). Here, I mainly follow Lamont (2018) in her conceptualization. She defines stigmatization as “a cultural process of negatively qualifying identities and differences” (Lamont, 2018, p. 423). Stigmatization, in Lamont’s view, involves the absence of confirmation or recognition of an individual’s identity. She writes that it is “the absence of a social act by which an individual’s or group’s relative positive social worth is affirmed or acknowledged by others” (Lamont, 2018, p. 423). Rather than being authenticated as belonging to a social world, individuals are instead denied access. However, the success or failure of a given stigmatization process depends on power. As Link and Phelan (2001, p. 375) write, “stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic, and political power—it takes power to stigmatize.”

This is particularly important when we consider political groups. As Becker (1963/1997, p. 1) points out, “all social groups make rules and attempt, at some times and under some circumstances, to enforce them.” When we consider political action, the question becomes which group(s) will have the power to enforce their rules, understandings, and definitions upon others, and deny the legitimacy of other groups and individuals. I suggest that a social world perspective

helps us to answer this question. Strauss (1982, p. 181) argues that “certain members of the [social] world will earn the right—or be ceded the right, perhaps—to be expert legitimators of exemplary actions and products.” Relatedly, he also suggests that within a given social world there exist ‘core activities’, or an idea “that certain activities are worth doing, and ‘we’ are doing them”(Strauss, 1982, p. 174). Strauss (1982, p. 175) argues that doing these activities can often lead to a “claim to worthiness”. If we consider the social world of Swedish politics, actors become ‘expert legitimators’ due to their institutional position. These legitimators then have the power to define membership in this social world. The legitimacy of different actors can be linked to the concept of symbolic universes. Symbolic universes are realities where “all the sectors of the institutional order are integrated in an all-embracing frame of reference...because all human experience can now be conceived of as taking place within it” (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 114). The boundaries of a social world, as I noted above, are set by the limits of effective communication. Mead (1934, p. 260) refers to this as a universe of discourse. In the introductory chapter, I defined politics as ‘actions aimed at changing, maintaining, or challenging social organization’. The symbolic universe of Swedish politics, then, revolving around social organization, can be seen as equivalent to the universe of discourse that arises from this social world.

The major relevance of the notion of symbolic universe within this thesis, however, concerns less how they come into being, and more with whose interests they serve. Symbolic universes serve to legitimate “particular institutions and roles...by locating them in a comprehensively meaningful world” (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 121). Certain social identities become legitimated as powerful. Various individuals and groups become “the custodians of the ‘official’ definitions of reality” (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 124). Magdalena Andersson, as an individual, is not someone who is an expert legitimator. However, Magdalena Andersson, as prime minister of Sweden, cannot be ignored and instead enforces and legitimates certain political habits at the expense of others. Stigmatization, in this sense, is a process of delegitimization. As Goffman (1963/1990, p. 12) argues, stigma means “possessing an attribute that makes [a person] different from others in a category of persons available for him to be and of a less desirable kind- in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak.” Stigmatized actors are those who can be ignored, or who have views, ideas, and opinions which are wrong. Not only do they not have the power to impose their definition of a situation, but they also can be denied the

right to participate in a given social world. It is in this sense that I argue that the extra-parliamentary left is a stigmatized actor in the social world of Swedish politics. The extra-parliamentary left is not a legitimate political actor, and its views, opinions, and ideas do not need to be considered. Government agencies class this environment as extremist or violence-affirming as a means of stigmatization, and the police and security service serve as enforcers of this definition of reality. As Jämte and Ellefsen (2020b) show, other institutional actors such as teachers or social workers are also involved in this stigmatization process. The habits of the extra-parliamentary left are stigmatized in Swedish society.

However, an important aspect of stigmatization is that an individual or an act must be labeled and interpreted as stigmatized (Becker, 1963/1997). It is not an inherent quality of acts or people. Mankoff (1971) makes a useful distinction between two manners in which individuals can be labeled, in discussing ascribed vs. achieved rule breaking¹⁴. He states that in ascribed rule breaking, individuals “do not necessarily have to act in order to be a rulebreaker; [they] acquire that status regardless of [their] behavior or wishes” (Mankoff, 1971, p. 205). Achieved rule breaking, conversely, “involves activity on the part of the rule-breaker”, individuals perform deviant acts and thus become labeled as deviant (Mankoff, 1971, p. 205). In the case of the extra-parliamentary left, individuals must achieve deviance. No one is born an extra-parliamentary leftist; one always becomes an extra-parliamentary leftist. An important corollary to this fact is that involvement in the extra-parliamentary left involves few stigma symbols. Goffman (1963/1990, p. 59) defines stigma symbols as “signs which are especially effective in drawing attention to a debasing identity discrepancy.” Furthermore, even the stigma symbols that do exist seldom “become a permanent part of the person” (Goffman, 1963/1990, p. 62). Taken together, the fact that extra-parliamentary leftism is an achieved stigma with few stigma symbols means that extra-parliamentary leftists almost always have the option of disidentifying as extra-parliamentary leftists. Individuals can almost always rejoin the non-stigmatized group, and become ‘normals’, in Goffman’s words.

Thus, one response to the stigmatization of the extra-parliamentary left would be for individuals or groups to decommit from their identities as extra-

¹⁴ This is extremely similar to Goffman’s distinction between discredited individuals and discreditable individuals. I prefer, however, the more active language involved in Mankoff’s description.

parliamentary leftists. A second, related option involves passing. Individuals involved with the extra-parliamentary left often have no trouble passing as non-stigmatized individuals in most societal situations. However, if the individual remains committed to the stigmatized identity, there exists still then discreditable information about this person. As Goffman (1963/1990, p. 98) notes, “the precariousness of [their] position will vary directly with the number of persons who are in on the secret.” In passing, individuals must still control the flow of information about their involvement in the extra-parliamentary left, keeping it particularly from those who would have the power to enforce the stigma. Each of these two processes is important and does occur within the extra-parliamentary left. However, my primary focus in relation to stigma and stigma management regards how individuals interact with ‘normals’ as extra-parliamentary leftists. That is, they do not hide their identity, or attempt to pass. Rather, in certain interactions or situations, individuals and groups specifically identify as extra-parliamentary leftists, despite attempts at stigmatization.

While there are a variety of manners that individuals can confront (Orne, 2013) or ‘fight back’ (Rogers & Buffalo, 1974) against a stigma, the main focus in this dissertation will revolve around the process of self-stigmatization. Lipp (1977, p. 66) argues that when stigmatization processes occur, “actors who suffer these disqualifications are frustrated in their practical behavior and being put into a situation of tension, they are likely to be in search of means of escape and evasion.” In such situations, “the stigmatized seek to neutralize, re-interpret, and redetermine the relevant socially-strategic guilt ascriptions” and “seek to offer counter-evaluations in one way or another” (Lipp, 1977, p. 66). This process, in which individuals attempt to reject the stigma and offer a different evaluation of an identity is self-stigmatization. In this process, “individuals and groups identify themselves symbolically with signs that, as society perceives them, and particularly as certain reference groups perceive them, are distinctly negative and which call forth dispositions for defense, or even persecution and revenge” (Lipp, 1977, p. 66). Here, we can return to our example of the masked protestor. Rather than accepting that masks are wrong or bad at demonstrations, the extra-parliamentary left identifies with the mask, promoting it as a positive symbol of worth. Becker (1963/1997, p. 15) makes a similar point in discussing deviance, when he argues that “‘outsiders’ from the point of view of the person who is labeled deviant, may be the people who make the rules he had been found guilty of breaking.” In self-stigmatization, there is an attempt to turn the stigma back on the stigmatizers and

portray them as guilty of breaking the rules. Stigmatization, then, is no longer a delegitimizing process. It, instead, becomes an authentication process. Rather than disidentification, self-stigma involves a further identification with a stigmatized characteristic. It is a form of re-commitment or increased commitment. Individuals do not hide their affiliation with a stigmatized identity, but instead embrace it.

All revolutionary movements must engage in self-stigmatization to some degree. In the literature, the classic example of self-stigmatization is what Gil Arbiol (2004) calls the Jesus movement, or Jesus and his disciples. Through self-stigmatization, this movement was able to “propel peripheral areas of deviant activity into the center of social life” (Lipp, 1977, p. 68). However, the example of this movement is also useful in pointing out the self-stigmatization can have inescapable consequences. Jesus, famously, was crucified. However, the extra-parliamentary left does not find itself in such an extreme situation. The consequences of identification with the extra-parliamentary left are more likely to be social, rather than legal or carceral, in terms of ostracism or loss of status. Similarly, Lipp (1977, p. 68) suggests that self-stigmatizing movements are likely to succeed “only in the course of persistent, latent but cumulative, social crises that are already undermining social stability.” Sweden, in its current construction, does not appear to fulfill this qualification. Nonetheless, I wish to emphasize that although stigmatization is a reliant on power, the stigmatized have a variety of options in response. Individuals do not need to accept stigmatization, but can reject it, and attempt to overturn a stigma. As I discuss in Chapter 6, I argue that different types of self-stigmatization characterize the interactions in various arenas between extra-parliamentary leftists and other groups, as individuals continue to identify with the extra-parliamentary left, despite its associated meanings.

3.4 Socialization and Identity

In discussing stigma, I argued that stigmatization always relates to identity. I further argued that self-stigmatization involves a recommitment and further identification with a group or symbol. I therefore now turn towards a discussion of identity. However, as the meanings of all objects (including the self) are learned, we cannot properly discuss identity without discussing socialization. Thus, this section begins with an examination of how individuals come to feel that a group

represents them, of how we can begin to speak of we, rather than I. However, just as individuals become part of groups, groups also become part of individuals. The second part of this section therefore looks into the question of how we begin to feel that we represent a group. In examining these questions, I aim to highlight three separate processes: identity confirmation, identity interruption, and identity degradation. In doing so, I seek to highlight the interactional, processional, and contingent nature of individual and collective identity, noting that stability of self arises out of interaction, rather than as a natural consequence of life.

As I noted above, in a general symbolic interactionist perspective, individuals act on the basis of their interpretations of symbols and objects. The self is one such object (Mead, 1934). Part of defining a situation involves defining ourselves, and the other individuals around us. These definitions of ourselves are what I will call identity, in this dissertation. Identity is a notoriously tricky concept¹⁵. However, identities are always social. We learn to be members of groups and learn to define ourselves in reference to and through the language of those groups. Yet, because we are always members of different groups, and because interpretations and definitions are always interactional, identities are always fluid, multiple, and relational. Scott (2016, p. 2) defines identity “as a set of integrated ideas about the self, the roles we play, and the qualities that make us unique.” These ideas nonetheless originate in interaction, and it is therefore impossible to speak of identity without speaking of socialization. I thus begin this section with a brief discussion of the process of socialization, and how we learn to define ourselves and our surroundings.

3.4.1 Socialization

With socialization, I refer to the process in which individuals become part of groups or communities. In other words, socialization entails the process in which we become members in a group, a social world, or a society. P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 150) define socialization as “the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it.” They further argue that this process includes “the individual ‘taking over’ the world in which the others already live” (P. Berger & Luckmann,

¹⁵ As an example, Strauss (1959/1977, p. 13) in his book on the search for identity notes that he has “nowhere defined ‘identity’.”

1966/1991, p. 150). Mead's theory of role-taking provides the most comprehensive description of this process in which we take over the world from others. Mead argues, of course, that in the earliest stages of the development of the self, children play at "taking different roles" (Mead, 1934, p. 150). As time passes, we learn to view ourselves not only from the perspective of different specific individuals but also from "discrete organized groups (the "game stage") [and] the abstract community (the "generalized other")" (Blumer, 1969, p. 13). When we have finally reached the stage where we can view ourselves and define our situations in reference to this generalized other, "its formation within the consciousness means that the individual now identifies not only with concrete others, but with a generality of others, that is, with a society" (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 153). While Berger and Luckmann almost echo Mead in their thoughts on the process of socialization, I argue that they have two major theoretical benefits that are more difficult to find in the work of Mead and Blumer. First, Berger and Luckmann rely upon the concept of significant others. Significant others are the primary agents of reality mediation and reality confirmation in this perspective. P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 151) define significant others as individuals "who are in charge of [an individual's] socialization." They relate this to identity in arguing that as "the self is a reflective entity, reflecting the attitudes first taken by significant others towards it; the individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others" (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 152). Here, our earliest identities are a reflection of how caregivers treat us (Engdahl, 2004).

Prior to further discussing significant others, it is necessary to note the second essential distinction in Berger and Luckmann, namely that between primary and secondary socialization. They define primary socialization as "the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society" while secondary socialization "is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of the society" (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 150). Although this bears some resemblance to the concept of primary and secondary groups (e.g. Cooley, 1902/2017; Lee, 1964), I would suggest that in reformulating the original pragmatic concepts in a more phenomenological way, Berger and Luckmann grant us an increased ability to look at how primary and secondary socialization

relate to each other¹⁶. With one exception (see 7.1), it is in general secondary socialization that is of interest in this dissertation (this is not a study of early childhood). Even in secondary socialization, however, significant others continue to play a crucial role. In his discussion of marijuana smoking, Becker argues that individuals must learn to redefine the experience of smoking marijuana as pleasurable. He suggests that this occurs “typically, in interaction with more experienced users who, in a number of ways, teach the novice to find pleasure in the experience which is at first so frightening” (Becker, 1963/1997, p. 54). These more experienced users fill the role of significant others here in learning to redefine a situation in line with the group’s perception. In these interactions, individuals “learn to adopt the values and perspectives of the group, taking on new roles and modifying others, and thus establishing valuable new identifications with the politics and symbols of the groups as a whole” (Donnelly & Young, 1988, p. 225). In this process, as part of the new meanings individuals learn, we learn to identify ourselves differently, as members of the new group. We thus take on a new identity, in line with the language in use within this group. This, nevertheless, could not happen without some type of socialization process. It is impossible to identify as an extra-parliamentary leftist if one does not know that extra-parliamentary leftists exist. However, in identifying as an extra-parliamentary leftist, individuals also identify with the motives, interpretations, and habits of extra-parliamentary leftists and now become individuals who act like extra-parliamentary leftists.

It is important to note at this point two aspects which prevent this process from again becoming static. First, socialization is never total (in general this is likely true, but it is certainly true in this dissertation). There are, as discussed above, always new situations, and always situations where other identities may come to the fore. In some situations, identifying as an extra-parliamentary leftist may not matter, it, instead, may be more important to identify as a leftist, a Swede, or a woman and interact on the basis of these motivations. Second, significant others do not transmit the exact same social world. As P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 151) write, significant others “select aspects of [the world] in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncrasies.” Depending on who our

¹⁶ It also allows me to avoid any discussion of primary ideals, which are not present in Berger and Luckmann.

significant others are, we learn slightly (or wildly) different habits. This occurs in both primary socialization as well as secondary socialization. As we act and interact in the world, we thus constantly must check that our habits are correct. In other words, once individuals identify as extra-parliamentary leftists, they must still continue to check that others interpret them as acting in this manner, and that their identification is both correct and shared. In these interactions, a variety of identity processes can occur. In this dissertation, I will focus on three of these processes, which I refer to as identity confirmation, identity interruption, and identity degradation.

3.4.2 Identity Confirmation

Although we can call ourselves members of any group, a vital aspect of group membership resides in how others see us, and if they identify us as members of a group. Donnelly and Young (1988, p. 234) define identity confirmation as “the process of establishing a reputation as a reliable individual whose values and behavior apparently conform to [group] expectations.” Identity confirmation, in this sense, allows us to continue to think and act as though we are who we think we are. P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 170) highlight significant others as “particularly important for the ongoing confirmation of that crucial element of reality we call identity.” Just as significant others teach us how to act, they also confirm that we are acting appropriately. How significant others define us matters. P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 170) continue in noting that “to retain confidence that he is indeed who he thinks he is, the individual requires...the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation that his significant others bestow upon him.” Strauss (1959/1977) nuances our conception of significant others slightly in a similar discussion surrounding what he calls status-forcing. He notes that “it is common-place that the impact upon self varies greatly by whether one can or cannot afford to ignore the placement” (Strauss, 1959/1977, p. 81). There are a number of institutional or legal judgements upon the self that we cannot afford to ignore, in his words. For example, in the case of the extra-parliamentary left, Swedish government agencies classify the extra-parliamentary left as an extremist, violence-affirming environment. While individual extra-parliamentary leftists may reject this classification, it is not possible to ignore it. It influences the identity of an extra-parliamentary leftist.

Viewing significant others in this manner takes us naturally into questions surrounding power. As I noted above in the discussion on stigma, certain individuals within a social world become expert legitimators. Similarly, doing certain activities in a given social world allows individuals to make a 'claim to worthiness'. I argue that there is a clear relation between the worthiness of certain activities and the ability of individuals to render judgement on group membership in the extra-parliamentary left. For example, if other individuals view and interpret one as engaging in anti-fascist acts on a consistent basis, individuals and organizations can then make a claim to worthiness. As part of this claim, they can become 'expert legitimators' who are then able to say whether other groups and individuals belong to the extra-parliamentary left. Conversely, while many individuals in the extra-parliamentary left may read the work of David Harvey, reading Harvey is not necessarily an act of worthiness. This, then, means that one can afford to ignore the judgement or placement of individuals who only read Harvey, and do not act otherwise. However, it is important to note two aspects here. Although we do not need to be emotionally attached to significant others, we often are. It is this emotional attachment that makes their judgement impossible to ignore, rather than any claim to power in the social world. Second, particularly in a social world without formal institutions, claims to power or worthiness are always contingent, fragile, and fleeting. As activities and habits develop within a given social world, conflicts will and do occur surrounding representation.

Strauss (1993, p. 172) defines representation¹⁷ as an "action [that] consists of representing some person or collectivity to another person or collectivity." Representation is clearly linked to worthiness, in that the participants in a social world view certain actions as more accurately representing the activities of that world. In interaction, Strauss makes clear that individuals can be interpreted as representing other groups or statuses than the one they wish to. He argues that "in daily interactions, different degrees of representation are likely to appear during different phases of a given act" (Strauss, 1993, p. 172). The important aspect here is that in an interaction individuals are likely to alternate between being interpreted as representing the community, their specific political group, and themselves (in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, location, etc.). Part of identity confirmation relates to the acceptance or interpretation of representation claims.

¹⁷ Strauss discusses representation, in contrast to Goffman's presentation.

In claiming that a certain act or interpretation represents an individual's identity as an extra-parliamentary leftist rather than as a student, a woman, or a Swede, if this claim is accepted the individual's identity is confirmed in this process. Similarly, if the claim is rejected, then the individual must modify their definition of their identity, in order to bring their understandings in line with the group. Representation, then, involves making identity claims, and attempting to show that one is a member of a group.

3.4.3 Identity Interruption

As Blumer (1969, p. 18) notes, "even in the case of pre-established and repetitive joint action each instance of such joint action has to be formed anew." Because joint or collective action always has to be reformed, and remade, there is always a possibility that something can go wrong. The situation can always be jolted from habitual to problematic. When identities become problematic, and definitions of the self must be re-established, I will refer to this as identity interruption. To return to the end of the previous section, when representation claims are denied, this is an example of identity interruption. Similarly, a significant other could deny an attempt to claim an identity. In cases of identity interruption, P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 170) argue that an individual can solve the problem "either by modifying his reality or his reality-maintaining relationships." In essence, individuals can accept that they are not truly what they think they are, or they can find others than those involved in the specific identity interruption interaction to confirm their identity. If individuals chose the first option, we can call this a process of disidentification (Scott, 2016, p. 146). In this case, individuals decide (either quickly or over time) to stop identifying with a group. The core activities of a group are no longer something 'we' do, but instead something 'they' do. While Strauss (1959/1977, p. 122) suggests that it is likely that fast and slow processes of disidentification differ somewhat, he nonetheless argues that each is likely to involve "moments of intense anguish...[and] the sense of being about to burn one's bridges." In cases of disidentification, individuals are no longer committed to an identity, but in losing this commitment, they are also no longer committed to the relationships, means, and goals of the group or community. However, if they wish to remain committed to an identity, they can instead choose to seek other relationships, and new significant others.

In the process of finding new relationships for identity confirmation, individuals remain committed to their definition of self, and need to find ways to re-establish this definition. The simplest way, as P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 171) note, is to “[downgrade] some of these people from their status as significant others and [turn] instead to others for significant reality-confirmations.” It is here that the segmentation of a social world plays a crucial role. If one group (or even one individual) has a monopoly in assessing worthiness within the social world, this will not be possible. However, in more complex social worlds or communities, individuals will instead be able to seek identity-confirmation from others whose judgement carries weight, enabling them to ignore the individuals involved in the identity interruption process. Yet, again, we must consider issues of power and status. The social positions of the individuals involved in identity interruption processes are likely to matter immensely, with higher-status individuals more easily able to re-establish their identity definition. Power and status are nonetheless always interactional and relational, and as I noted above, the individuals who we cannot afford to ignore are not only those who occupy a higher status position, but also those with whom we share emotional bonds. Significant others, in this sense, are always to some degree individual. Nevertheless, when we chose to seek other significant others, we can in this way maintain our identities and group membership.

3.4.4 Identity Degradation

While identity interruption can lead to a loss of identity, it is not the same as identity degradation. Scott (2016, p. 148) defines degradation as “an individual’s demotion in status, loss of role, or rejection from a social group.” I follow her in defining identity degradation as the process in which individuals lose their membership in a group and lose their identities as part of that group. However, while identity interruptions can happen in the course of normal interaction, identity degradations are purposeful, directed events where individuals are rejected or denied membership. Garfinkel (1956) highlights the public nature of degradation events. As he says, degradation ceremonies are events where “the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types” (Garfinkel, 1956, p. 420). He further argues that degradation events occur in reference to ‘total identities’, or are based on “not what a person may be expected to have done or to do...but to what the group

holds to be the ultimate ‘grounds’ or ‘reasons’ for his performance” (Garfinkel, 1956, p. 420). Another key aspect of degradation is that it revolves around moral questions, and that “moral indignation may reinforce group solidarity” (Garfinkel, 1956, p. 421). Identity degradations thus occur when individuals are interpreting in acting in such a manner that violates the moral habits of the group. In doing so, individuals reveal that they do not belong to the group, and that they have no claim to representation. In essence, they are deprived of their ability to identify with the group. When this process occurs successfully, individuals are denied membership in the group.

However, as Garfinkel (1956) emphasizes, the outcome of any given identity degradation process is not fixed. Again, it depends on the status and power of the individuals involved. It also depends on which rule individuals are seen to violate. In the extra-parliamentary left, identity degradation tends to occur in reference to sexual or domestic violence. Yet, the outcome of this process is always uncertain. While morally the social world condemns these acts, identity degradation is not always successful, and rather than strengthening the habits of the community, it can instead lead to disintegration and conflict when individuals contest the degradation process. Nonetheless, identity degradation is a process where individuals attempt to deny or take away an identity from an individual. In doing so, they attempt to deny membership in a group through moral reasoning.

3.4.5 Identities: Individual and Collective

In this section, I have presented identity and some related processes as I will use them in this dissertation. I defined identity following Scott (2016) as a set of ideas about ourselves, what we do, and what we want. Or in other words, identity is who we think we are. I then discussed how we come to assume identities through socialization processes, focusing on the role of significant others in helping us to learn the habits of a given group. Nonetheless, as identities are always in danger in interaction, I examined three identity processes which are particularly important in this dissertation. Identity confirmation happens when individuals validate or confirm that we are who we think we are. Identity interruption occurs when our definitions of self become problematic, and we must re-establish these definitions. Identity degradation involves a directed attempt to deny membership in a group or community to others on moral grounds. Here, I wish to make one final point. While I have discussed these processes in relation to the establishment

of individual identities, I argue that the same processes can occur at the collective level. That is, collective actors can encounter the same difficulties or successes in interactional processes with other collective actors or with individuals. Groups can also suffer identity degradation, encounter identity interruption, or experience identity confirmation. Identity, thus, in this dissertation refers to actors, who can be individual or collective.

3.5 Communities and Community Spaces

In the previous chapter, I emphasized that one goal of a politics of community is the creation of community spaces. I defined community spaces as interactions in which individuals feel at home and where their identities as community members and the existence of the community can be confirmed (see Chapter 2). Above, I explored the process of identity confirmation, noting that group membership depends not only on how we see ourselves, but even on how others see us. Here, I focus on the crucial distinction between group and community and explore how membership in a community allows us to feel at home.

As I have argued above, we learn to be human. Dewey (1927/2016, p. 180) argues that part of this process involves developing “though the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community, one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires, and methods.” In this sense, as we learn the symbolic meanings of the group into which we are born, we become initially a member of this community. Schutz (1944, 1945) discusses this as the ways of life of the in-group. He further adds the crucial point that we feel at home in a community. We feel at home because “life at home follows an organized pattern of routine; it has its well-determined goals and well-proved means to bring them about, consisting of a set of traditions, habits, institutions, timetable for activities of all kinds, etc.” (Schutz, 1945, p. 370). We see immediately that communities are not the same as groups. Within a given community, we not only feel that the way of viewing the world is natural, but we also adopt the various goals, purposes, and desires of the community. We make its goals our own, and work towards them.

Fine (2018, p. 168) argues a “community is more than a space, more than a network. It reveals commitment to a project, a group, and a practice.” To take Dewey’s point about how we come to belong to the human community further,

we come to belong to any subsequent community through learning. We learn to interpret symbols in reference to schemes of interpretation at work in the community, and we learn the ways of life of a community. Dewey further argues that a community forms when individuals are “all cognizant of the common end [i.e. goal] and all interested in it so that they [regulate] their specific activity in view of it” (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 5). It is with this that Dewey returns us to the difference between groups and communities. Human action is always social, we are always interacting with other individuals in combined actions. In this sense, human action is always collective. However, it is only when individuals adopt the same common goal, when they are committed to the same end, that we can begin to speak of community. This happens through learning meanings so that “wants and impulses are then attached to common meanings. They are thereby transformed into desires and purposes, which, since they implicate a common or mutually understood meaning, present new ties, converting a conjoint activity into a community of interest and endeavor” (Dewey, 1927/2016, p. 179).

Communities then arise due to a shared purpose or goal, which can only happen when individuals share meanings. This, then, only happens in interaction, as I have explored above. As Wohl (2015, p. 302) writes, communities are “formed and maintained through interaction.” The form of interaction most associated with community is face-to-face interaction. Dewey (1927/2016, p. 227), for example, argues that “in its deepest and richest sense a community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse.” The extra-parliamentary left, as a group, depends upon face-to-face interaction. It is through face-to-face interaction that a group can become a community¹⁸. As Schutz (1967) and Schutz and Luckmann (1973) make clear, face-to-face interaction involves different features than other types of interaction. It is in face-to-face interaction¹⁹ “that the intersubjectivity of the life-world is developed and continually confirmed” (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 68). Schutz argues that it is only in these interactions that we have a chance to confirm that our system of typifications and relevances are shared, and that we have the correct interpretation of the social world (meaning, of course, the interpretation shared within our group). It is thus in face-to-face

¹⁸ At least for the purposes here, communities cannot be solely imagined (Anderson, 2006), they require actual interaction. Communities can grow to become imagined, but membership in a community always originates in face-to-face interaction (see Fine, 2014)

¹⁹ The Schutzian term for this would be a *we-relation*. See Schutz (1967, pp. 163-172) and Schutz and Luckmann (1973, pp. 61-68).

interactions that we confirm that the goals and meanings of the community that we have are correct, and that others are working towards the same goals.

A crucial aspect of face-to-face interactions in community is that they involve a sense of intimacy. Schutz (1945, p. 372) argues that in these cases “to each of the partners the other’s life becomes, thus, a part of his own autobiography, an element of his personal history. What he is, what he grew to be, what he will become is codetermined by his taking part in the manifold actual or potential primary relationships” within the community. In other words, community implies a sense of togetherness (similar to what Wohl (2015) calls groupness) where individuals interact intimately. There is a sense that ‘we’ are in this together, and that what ‘we’ are and will become is dependent upon each other. Communities imply commitment, or “a shared way of talking about and practicing obligation in everyday contexts” (Lichterman, 1996, p. 23). Strauss (1959/1977, pp. 39-40) argues that commitment “will involve conviction as to what is right and proper as well as their converse” and that when individuals “conceive of [themselves] as an integral part of the group...its path to some extent becomes his own path, its failures his own failures.” As any of us probably recognize, this is not true of all groups or interactions we take part in. Communities are groups, but they are different from groups. Interactions in communities involve shared goals, intimacy, and a sense of connected fate.

It is these interactions that I call community spaces in this dissertation. In community spaces, a process of identity confirmation occurs. Individuals confirm the intersubjectivity of the habits of the community, seeing that not only do they have certain goals, desires, and wants, but that others share these characteristics. They furthermore affirm the commitment of individuals to the group and to each other. When a community space forms, a feeling of intimacy exists—individuals are not alone, but rather united with others in pursuit of the goals of the community. However, it is important to emphasize that neither communities nor community spaces are static. As Schutz (1945, p. 372) argues, even in our most intimate relationships, “there is, of course, no certainty, that such a re-establishment and continuation will succeed” of our intimate relations in every new meeting. There remains a chance in every meeting that identity interruption can take place. However, it is “the existence of such a chance” of resumption of intimate relations that “is taken for granted” by all the members of the community (Schutz, 1945, p. 372). As I discussed above in speaking of habit, when this does not occur, situations become problematic and must be redefined. In the case of

community spaces and community relations, this entails not only a potential redefinition of self, but can even entail a redefinition of the goals of the community. Communities, furthermore, can always dissolve back into groups, engaged in associated action, but not community action. Repeated interaction merely implies chance, rather than certainty. The existence of a community, community spaces, and indeed a politics of community is an empirical question, rather than a theoretical one. I therefore now turn towards my method of investigating the social world of the extra-parliamentary left.

4 Studying Communal Life: Methodological Considerations

“In brief, the function of knowledge is to make one experience freely available in other experiences”

(Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 395)

In this chapter, I present the manner in which I have produced the data upon which I base the analysis of this dissertation. While this requires making clear exactly what I mean with ethnography and who I have talked with and observed, I suggest that it also encompasses making clear certain assumptions about what makes a study sociological, outlining the goals of a sociological study, and making some comments on what exists ‘in the world’. In other words, I argue that it is both necessary and important to discuss ontological and epistemological commitments, and to discuss what the point of research is. I therefore begin this chapter with a brief reflection on what it means to do a sociological research project, prior to discussing the philosophy of science I base my analysis upon. I then discuss the method of ethnography, noting how I have constructed the field and what specific things I have done in the field. Following this, I address both what I have missed or omitted in this construction of the field, as well as the ethical principles I have followed throughout my fieldwork. Finally, the chapter closes in discussing the analysis process, and its relation to reflexivity.

4.1 A Sociological Exploration

P. Berger (1963/2011, p. 16) argues that the goal of sociology is “understanding society in a disciplined way.” He goes on to argue that a sociological consciousness allows us “to perceive one’s own biography as a movement within and through

decided social worlds, to which specific meaning systems are attached” (P. Berger, 1963/2011, p. 65). Berger shifts in these two quotes from considering the role of the discipline to the role of the individual. On an individual level, a sociological consciousness grants us a greater understanding of our own lives, allowing us (perhaps) to see them as less a series of random events, and more a movement through a series of structured occurrences. At the same time, while our lives may take place within a structure, we retain a sense of individual freedom. Echoes of similar arguments exist in the classic work of C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*. Mills (1959/2000, p. 6) suggests that the sociological imagination “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.” Although Mills uses the word history here, rather than social world, there is a similar sense of our lives taking place within a greater structure. Mills (1959/2000, p. 6) highlights the dialectic existing between the individual and the society, arguing that “by the fact of his living, [the individual] contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.” We are not passive participants in this conception, passed along through the different stages of the life course with no control. Although our choices and actions are shaped and influenced through our position within the broader structures of society, we, in turn, exert our own influence upon those structures, affecting the meaning structures of both the social worlds we choose, and the social worlds we find ourselves in. For both Berger and Mills, this is the main sociological goal. We aim to understand the interplay between individual and structure. Mills (1959/2000, p. 6) even goes on to state that “no social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey.”

In doing a sociological study, I aim to understand the relations between these broader forces of society and the individual biography. There exists an interplay between these two facets, and how that interplay occurs and its consequences both in terms of the broader structure and the individual personality takes on immense importance. This sociological study attempts to examine the life of a group of individuals within their wider social worlds and attempts to account for the interplay between the broader forces at work and the development of the individual identity in terms of the unique biography of every individual. I further argue that this perspective on sociology fits with the theoretical perspective constructed in the previous chapter. Communities, habits, and identities are

interplays of what Berger and Luckmann call objective reality and subjective experience and biography. Theoretically, it does not make sense to consider one without considering the other. Similarly, then, methodologically, I must adopt a manner of investigation that allows me to explore both aspects, examining both how the more objective aspects of a social situation constrain and enable certain subjective choices, while at the same time, noting how the subjective actions change, reproduce, or challenge these seemingly objective structures.

I start here from the belief that while we can, in practice, bracket certain questions about ontology and the foundations of social reality in empirical studies, our ontological assumptions nevertheless have consequences about the types of conclusions that can be drawn in each study, and about the type of knowledge that is created in each study. Herbert Blumer (1969, p. 27) argues that “the principles that comprise the methodology of an empirical science have to cover the act of scientific inquiry...grappling with a given empirical world.” In my view, three questions must be addressed in relation to these principles. First, I note what the study object is, in a broad sense. Or, as Emirbayer (1997) puts it, does the world consist mainly of things or of processes? Second, I address the question of realness, or in other words, I argue for the relevance of a constructivist philosophy of science against a critical realist, STS, or other position within this study. Finally, I discuss the relation between everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge and note what this means for the type of knowledge I produce in this text.

As is likely evident from the theoretical perspective outlined in the previous chapter, I adopt a relationalist approach in this dissertation. Emirbayer bases much of his approach on Dewey’s thought, arguing for the importance of a transactional perspective (Liang & Liu, 2018). Emirbayer begins his well-known manifesto in contrasting the world of substances with the world of relations. He argues that “sociologists today are faced with a fundamental dilemma: whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in substances or in processes, in static ‘things’ or in dynamic unfolding relations” (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 281). Emirbayer (1997, p. 287) goes on to argue for the relational point of view, where “the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction.” Dewey (1927/2016, p. 190) makes a similar point in a discussion on minds, ridiculing “the idea of a mind, complete in itself, apart from action and from objects.” Within pragmatic thought, the conception of an individual existing outside of interactions and relations cannot occur. Similarly,

then, neither habits nor communities can exist outside of interactions and relations. Studying the world with this perspective suggests certain commitments. First, in all cases, I attempt to avoid reification. On a certain level, particularly in writing, some degree of reification is impossible to avoid. Writing transforms ongoing processes into static states by its very nature. At the same time, analytically, I attempt always to focus on the interaction, and the meanings, habits, and identities that exist within those interactions, rather than suggesting that these conceptual phenomena exist outside of the relation. Second, this also implies a commitment to processual thinking. Again, I argue that understanding the world as neither static nor fixed suggests that I must remain open to change, and the possibility that things could be different. It is, in this sense, processes of categorization rather than categorization itself that are interesting, as categories are always open to change. Throughout this dissertation, therefore, I aim to demonstrate both a commitment to relational thinking and use this type of thinking to better understand the empirical world.

With these brief comments on the general ontological perspective of this dissertation, I now continue with the question of realness, and what this implies for my epistemological stance. Luckmann (2008, p. 279) argues that every empirical study must start with one basic assumption, namely that we must accept “the claim of the world... that it is real.” In other words, he argues that “empirical sciences must subscribe to some version of ontological realism” (Luckmann, 2008, p. 280). Luckmann, following in the tradition of Schutz, subscribes to a notion that social reality, of some type, exists prior to its discovery or generation within a research project. It is important to note that this type of realism does not preclude objects created by humans. For Luckmann, Schutz, and other social constructivists, the products of human action and interaction are real. They exert a force upon the world, and upon individuals in the world, that cannot be denied. The consequence of this realist understanding of the world for Luckmann (2008, p. 282) is that it is the job of the social scientist to reconstruct social realities according to “the strict rules of evidence that govern such activities in the context of science.” However, according to Luckmann, it is necessary to note that we do not construct social reality as scientists²⁰, but that it exists, in some form, prior to our undertaking.

²⁰ It is important to note here that Luckmann does allow for social science reconstructions to enter into the social stock of knowledge, and influence the common-sense constructions of the

If we accept (as I do), the realist position of Luckmann, we must nonetheless also remember the social constructivist, phenomenological, and relationist aspects of this perspective. Things are real to the degree that we understand them as real, and the world pushes back against us. I argue that we can take the pragmatist notion of truth and apply it to notions of realness. James (1907/1997a, p. 114, emphasis original) argues simply that “true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify” and that “the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events.” Whether something is real or not is dependent upon whether we make it real, and whether we can verify and validates its realness. The consequence of this type of thinking regards how I view the relation between what we might call scientific realness and everyday realness. Namely, the two are connected and cannot be separated. James (1907/1997a, p. 121) argues that scientifically in choice of explanation (or theory), “we must find a theory that will work...our theory must mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences. It must derange common sense and previous belief as little as possible.” If we view truth and realness in this manner, epistemologically, we must therefore begin in the social reality where meanings and ideas for individuals become true. Both ontologically and epistemologically then, this position suggests therefore that all theoretical explanations must bear some resemblance to what others regard as true, and to the social reality where these ideas become true.

Schutz (1953, 1954) makes a similar point. He argues that sociologists do not seek to merely “describe and analyze facts, [group] them under pertinent categories, and study the regularities in their shape and development...and arrive at a system of the social sciences, discovering the basic principles and the analytical laws of the social world”²¹ (Schutz, 1970a, p. 268). We are instead concerned with meaning for actual social actors. We should focus upon how actors come to acquire, maintain, and create the meaning that social objects have for each individual. Schutz (1970a, p. 268) argues that we are, in general, concerned with how “human beings understand one another and themselves.” Dorothy Smith (1987) also advocates for beginning our work in the everyday world. Smith (1987, p. 88) notes that, in general, “our work returns to, is aimed at, and is repossessed

world that exist. However, he argues, in general, that common-sense constructions should always be given precedence over scientific constructions of the world.

²¹ Schutz is, in any case, highly doubtful that we would be able to do this even if this was the goal.

by knowers who are participants in the discourse...rather than knowers who are members of the society anywhere in it.” We begin not from the meaning structures or constructs of the everyday individual, but rather from the constructs that exist in academic discourse, or within the ruling apparatus. In doing so, we do not reconstruct knowledge connected to the experiences of individuals but rather reconstruct academic concepts far removed from the actual social reality. The insight in both Schutz and Smith regards the fact that social scientists are not the only individuals who try to understand society and the events happening around us, but that all individuals, regardless of training, create explanations and try to understand the events of their lives. We, as sociologists, merely do it according to different methods and with different aims.

What, then, are the consequences of this understanding of knowledge and academic knowledge? The goal of research should then not be to bring order into chaos, or to impose understandings on individuals. Rather, it must be to situate the already existing understandings, and to understand actions on the basis of these understandings. The world is constructed in the sense that meaning structures of specific groups and communities have been built over time through human interaction. Nonetheless, they are also real, meaning here that these worlds of meaning and their accompanying understandings have consequences in the world, and that these understandings are, in many ways, just as legitimate as academic constructs and understandings. Thus, the social reality reconstructed here must be based on these common-sense constructs. However, in the process of reconstruction, I aim to place this social reality within its context, and demonstrate how it is developed, built up, and maintained (or destroyed) in order to attempt to explicate “the social organization of the everyday world” (Smith, 1987, p. 91). While the inquiry must begin with common sense, I aim to end, as Mills says, in the intersection of biography and history.

Therefore, the goal is not simply to understand the practices of a group of individuals, or to provide a journalistic account of a social world. Rather, the goal must be to set a group of individuals in relation to the meaning structure of their common social world, and to situate that social world in the broader power relations and social forces at work in our society. Nonetheless, this analysis must never lose touch with the actual, empirical social world. It must retain a sense of empirical validity, while at the same time placing these empirical findings within their proper context. It is impossible to understand the state of left-wing activism today in Sweden without considering the development of capitalism in the Nordic

states, and the retrenchment of the Swedish welfare state. At the same time, as noted above, these forces, while constraining, do not determine. The meanings individuals and groups attribute to changes in the structure of capitalism form the basis of their actions. These actions, in turn, reflect back upon the structure. My intention is to keep focus on the human relations in my study, and to recognize and analyze how these relations reconstruct society, both in terms of a social world (the participants' world) and in terms of a social structure (including their positions in society at large).

4.2 Ethnography

As established in the previous section, the main distinction drawn here between common-sense knowledge and academic knowledge rests on the manner in which it is acquired. One method that is particularly suited to the study of everyday social reality is ethnography. In this dissertation, I use a conception of ethnography heavily influenced by the work of Paul Atkinson (2014) and Herbert Blumer (1969). Atkinson advocates for a form of ethnography that concerns itself mainly with the problems of social order and organization. As he says, “while there is no doubt ethnography is concerned with meaningful social action, it is also concerned with more than just what things or events mean to social actors...we are, or should be, preoccupied with forms of social organization and routines of social action” (Atkinson, 2014, p. 16). Atkinson starts from a position where he assumes that social worlds are fairly stable. In performing ethnography, we are interested in this accomplishment of stability, in how a number of disparate individuals can come together to undertake collective actions and maintain a collection of shared habits. Certain actions and interactions reoccur in mainly the same way amongst a community of individuals, whether it be the world of individuals living in Sweden or the world of extra-parliamentary anticapitalistic leftists. For example, the action of ordering a beer in a bar proceeds almost exactly the same way in almost all places in Sweden (and even, in my experience, in the United States). This is an extremely patterned interaction. Similarly, in the group under investigation within this study, group meetings can be thought of as patterned interactions, in that they proceed similarly regardless of the group under investigation. In Atkinson's version of ethnography, the reason that social order and stability exist is because “social actors share cultural forms and resources. They

generate orderly social encounters and they align their actions on the basis of shared resources” (Atkinson, 2014, p. 22). They share habits.

Notably, none of these assumptions about how social life takes place contain any direct methodological statements. However, it is on the basis of these assumptions that Atkinson (2014, p. 25) suggests that “at [ethnography’s] heart...is some form of participation in the everyday life of the social world under investigation.” Ethnography implies participation and presence in the group life of the relevant community. However, in discussing participation, Atkinson makes clear that he means more than just attending an event or sitting at a table, but that he argues that as ethnographers we must try to enter into the shared social world of the participants. I attempt to understand the going-ons around me and the actions, interactions, and events on the terms that those I am interested in studying would. Blumer (1969, p. 38), in his description of the method of symbolic interactionism, argues along similar lines to Atkinson that “if one is going to respect the social world, one’s problems, guiding conceptions, data, schemes of relationship, and ideas of interpretation have to be faithful to that empirical world.” Concepts and theories require adjustment depending on the evidence gathered within a social world. Thus, an important method of getting close to the empirical world under study is to spend time within it. Blumer (1969, p. 41) advocates for the use of “any ethically allowable procedure that offers a likely possibility of getting a clearer picture of what is going on in the area of social life.” Schutz argues for a similar, although slightly different, method of understanding a social world. He suggests that a researcher should “observe human interaction patterns or their results insofar as they are accessible to his observation and open to his interpretation” (Schutz, 1970a, p. 277). Again, this is an exhortation to go to the social world of the studied individuals and spend time within it.

Blumer suggests a two-stage process in terms of participation in a foreign social world, consisting of exploration and inspection. During the phase of exploration, a researcher may partake in “direct observation, interviewing of people, listening to their conversations, securing life-history accounts” amongst other methods (Blumer, 1969, p. 41). In essence, Blumer recommends doing, reading, or listening to anything that may help us to find more detail about this social world. As I describe in greater detail below, over the last two years, I have attended numerous events within this social world, listened to podcasts, interviewed individuals, read government reports, and read group manifestos in an attempt to

come closer to the social world of the participants in this study. However, I have focused mainly on three separate modes of gathering information: observation, interviews, and documents. In the following section, I will detail the events I have observed, the structure of my interviews (and the interviewees), and the documents I have analyzed, but prior to proceeding, I must briefly discuss one final point regarding ethnography, that aligns with Blumer's second stage of the research process.

While the exploration stage of the research process may occur in a somewhat unstructured manner, the inspection stage requires "an intensive focused examination of the empirical content of whatever analytical elements are used for purposes of analysis" (Blumer, 1969, p. 43). Here, Blumer refers to his well-known idea of sensitizing concepts. A theoretical concept points us in a certain direction, or suggests certain processes to be watchful for, but I use the empirical instances as a means of refining the concept, seeking to identify the "nature of the analytical element by an intense scrutiny of its instances in the empirical world" (Blumer, 1969, p. 45). In the exploration phase of this research project, I developed the concept of the politics of community, as no available concept appeared to fit with the empirical reality. Thus, as I moved into the inspection phase, I examined the social world through this concept rather than others, scrutinizing its appropriateness and suitability. Ethnography, in this sense, as Atkinson (2014, p. 44) points out "is theoretical." It is an abductive process, where, after having familiarized myself with the reality under study, I look for instances of concepts and theoretical processes to refine them and ensure that the reconstructed scientific knowledge remains connected to the empirical world. In this second stage of the process, I look for more empirical instances of a concept, and then work to refine the concept further through a constant return to the field.

4.3 Constructing the Worlds and Arenas

I thus now arrive at the description and presentation of the exact procedures I have used to attempt to come closer to the social reality of the group of extra-parliamentary anti-capitalist leftists. To do this, I utilize the arena and social world concepts discussed in the previous chapter. First, I discuss the process of entering the social world. This entails a brief description of the genesis of this research project, and my initial starting points. Continuing this line, I then discuss the

construction of the community, and how I have to come to include or exclude groups and individuals throughout this process. In other words, I discuss the field. Third, I describe the types of events, demonstrations, and interactions I have participated in over the course of this project and note what I have not participated in as well. I then discuss the other types of data production I have focused on, describing the interviews I have done and the documents I have read. This section closes in discussing omissions in the data production process, as well as ethics.

4.3.1 Constructing the Social World

The idea for this dissertation project grew largely out of everyday observation. When I moved to Malmö in 2016, I knew very little about the everyday presence of leftist politics on the streets around Möllevången²², consisting of reoccurring graffiti, lamp posts covered in stickers, posters informing on upcoming lectures, and the visible presence of various demonstrations covering every topic from schooling in Malmö to international revolution in the area's main square. More to the point, I struggled to understand it. Possessing a slightly stereotypical idea of Swedish society, I began to wonder about the individuals and groups who were driven not only to demonstrate on a regular basis, but also to spend their time building the infrastructure that enables these demonstrations. At this point, I had lived in Sweden for about three years, and had finally achieved enough command of the Swedish language to feel comfortable interacting with others in Swedish. Thus, when I saw a poster advertising an upcoming lecture on David Harvey's work, I decided to attend. This was sometime in the winter of 2016/2017, and prior to even acceptance into a doctoral program. This lecture was held at Amalthea Bokkafé. Amalthea is a book café that sells books, coffee, and leftist merchandise, which also hosts guests who give lectures on any topics relevant to leftist political movements such as Marxism, anti-fascism, climate activism, and feminism. Slowly, over the next few months, I attended a few more lectures there, and interacted with some of the 'regulars'. As a person, I was interested in learning more about the Swedish political environment, while academically, I was interested in the relation between theory and practice. Finally, in June 2017, I was

²² See the discussion of this area in section 5.4.

accepted to the PhD program in Lund with a project proposal that has now mutated into this text.

At this point, my relationship with this environment changed. I shifted from a curious outsider to a curious researcher. As I have attempted to outline above, this entails a different observational and participatory stance. If, prior to beginning this research project, I bore remarkable similarity to the stranger Schutz (1944) describes, I now moved to take on the role of an ethnographer. This entailed attempting to construct the group, or community, that I studied. I began this process in two separate manners. Based on some of these initial impressions from my experiences at Amalthea, I constructed an initial list of groups that I thought would be interesting to talk to. I did this in two ways. First, I looked at the other groups that had held events at or with Amalthea in the period before I began my fieldwork, based on the relational principle that things exist in interactions. Thus, to construct the social world, I thought that looking at who interacted with who was a reasonable place to start. For example, I looked up the groups who had organized the revolutionary May 1st demonstration in Malmö in 2017 and began to follow these groups on Instagram and Facebook. Second, I also conducted an extensive search of webpages, government reports, and social media to identify groups who described themselves as extra-parliamentary and anti-capitalist. Based on this list, I then began to attend events that these groups organized and hosted. The most important of these groups for this study are Anti-Fascist Action, Everything for Everyone, and Autonomous Organizing.

However, I also utilized the contacts I had developed at Amalthea as a means of asking questions about the community. For example, I asked about reading material and other cultural products, as well as asking if there were any groups or individuals they thought I should contact. Amalthea, and the individuals I first interacted with at Amalthea, therefore, play an important role in the initial construction of both the field and the research problem. Amalthea describes itself as “a part of the extra-parliamentary left of Malmö, and [we] want to offer a place for conversation, education and culture. We’re autonomous from political parties” (Amalthea Bokkafé, 2020). This study aims to describe and explain the social activities of the extra-parliamentary anti-capitalist community in Southern Sweden. Under all definitions of this social world, I have used throughout this process, Amalthea has always fallen within the social world. Furthermore, not only do Amalthea and individuals in Amalthea consistently interact with other groups and individuals within this community, but other individuals also often name

Amalthea as one of the groups belonging to this community. While I am aware that this initial construction and entrance into this world relied to some extent on Amalthea, I argue that this poses few problems for the study.

This initial attempt at gaining access worked better for some things than others. I received a fair amount of recommendations regarding things to read or watch (such as *Deltagänget* or *I stundens hetta*) but did not initially find many individuals willing to discuss their movement. I return to this below. However, to continue with the construction of the social world, I followed the same principles as I did initially throughout the course of the fieldwork for this dissertation. On the one hand, I remained attentive to interactions and relations, operating from the initial principle that it is in these interactions and relations that things come into being. Second, I used what Gold (1997) calls sociological sampling. In sociological sampling, the researcher assumes “that the people whose society is to be studied are the very best source of information on how to put together an empirically grounded, representative sample of that society” (Gold, 1997, p. 390)²³. Thus, I have constantly asked my participants about who belongs to their “movement” or community and allowed them to define who should be within the ‘field’ of study. In adhering to these two major principles, I argue that my empirical work has produced a broad array of data, while at the same time remaining theoretically driven.

4.3.2 In the Arenas

With these broad principles of field construction in mind, I thus now move into the specifics of detailing exactly which types of events I have attended, and with whom I have talked. I further note here how I have operationalized the definition of participation above, and what I did while attending events. The major period of data production for this study occurred between January 2018 and March 2020. In this manner, the onset of the global pandemic also served as the end of my major fieldwork, particularly as it was no longer possible to hold most political events. In this period, I attended almost one event per week (with some small exceptions when I was on vacation) and often two to three events a week. I have thus developed relationships with a number of my participants, which in turn has

²³ This bears obvious resemblance to what Lofland (1976) calls ‘member-identified’ categories. See also Hannerz (2013).

allowed for greater access to a number of events not usually regarded as political. However, one consequence of attempting to perform a sociological study is that in the role of researcher, as Fine (1993, p. 272) points out, we “should not dislike anyone.” Nonetheless, as human beings we obviously like certain individuals to a greater or lesser degree. Individuals may also dislike us. Methodologically, this leads to a situation where I had greater access with individuals with whom I had greater rapport. However, I have constantly attempted to counteract this situation. In terms of choosing events and individuals to interact with, I have asked any individual who was recommended to me, or with whom I interacted in an extended sense whether they would be interested in participating in this study. Similarly, I have attended public events on an equal opportunity basis, attempting to attend the public events of all groups whom I identified as interesting for this study. However, the notion of rapport influenced greatly the type of private events that I was able to attend, and likely has had consequences for the analysis of this dissertation. I therefore separate this section into two parts, the first dealing with public events and the second relating to less public, or private events.

Public Events

In the period between 2018 and 2020, I attended every large demonstration held in Malmö which involved groups from the extra-parliamentary left. The most prominent of these demonstrations are the yearly May 1st demonstration, held on International Workers’ Day, and the demonstrations held on the 8th of March, International Women’s Day. In each case, there are competing, or at least other²⁴, demonstrations throughout the city. However, the extra-parliamentary left organizes its own demonstrations on these days, usually under the headline of ‘The Revolutionary 1st of May’ on International Workers’ Day and ‘Feminism from Below’ on International Women’s Day. I have also traveled to Gothenburg and Stockholm to attend large national demonstrations, accompanying informants on these trips. The demonstration in Gothenburg occurred in September 2017, and was a counterdemonstration, with groups protesting the fact that the city had granted a parade permit to the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR), as I discussed in the opening of this dissertation. Conversely, the demonstration in Stockholm was in August 2018, and held in front of the headquarters of the Swedish trade union organization LO to protest against

²⁴ I return to this question of competition or complement in Chapter 8.

proposed changes to the law regarding the right to strike for Swedish workers. In addition to these larger demonstrations, I have also attended smaller demonstrations in both Lund and Malmö. The topics these demonstrations addressed ranged in topic from cuts in school funding to demonstrations in support of Kurdistan to protests against Alternative for Sweden (AFS), a Swedish radical right party. While these are certainly public events, they occur with a greater frequency and a smaller degree of planning than the yearly re-occurring events and tend to have a smaller number of protestors present. Nonetheless, all of these demonstrations have at least one thing in common. Namely, they were all organized, at least in part, by a group or individuals from the extra-parliamentary left. At times this is publicized, and at others it is not.

Demonstrations are public events to a very clear degree. They occur on city streets and attempt to take space on public roads and squares. They are often organized in accordance with city regulations, they cost no money to enter or attend, and there is no formalized barrier to participation. On a continuum of public to private events, I would place demonstrations on the far end of the public scale. However, I have also attended other public events such as lectures, book releases, book fairs, film festivals and movie showings amongst others. While I would define these events as less public, as they can take place in privately-owned buildings and at times have an entrance fee, they remain public events in the meaning that the intended audience, at least ostensibly, is the general public. These events are not always organized by groups within the extra-parliamentary community, but individuals within the extra-parliamentary left attend and even often have what is referred to in Swedish as a 'bokbord'. These are tables where groups hand out information or sell books, t-shirts, stickers, or other similar items. Thus, there is often a noticeable extra-parliamentary presence at these events, even if they are not organized explicitly by extra-parliamentary groups or individuals.

An example may help to clarify this point. Each year, the Nordic Labor Film Festival is organized at Panora, a movie theater, and the ABF building in Malmö. An organization called *Folkets Bio Malmö* (The People's Cinema Malmö) runs Panora, and is part of a broader national organization, Riksföreningen Folkets Bio (National People's Cinema) which distributes and shows independent films across Sweden (Folkets Bio Malmö, 2020). A group called RåFILM organizes the festival. This group describes itself as a "film collective that connects film and activism. Our purpose is to facilitate the production of films which take up societal questions and question norms through collaboration" (RåFilm, 2020).

This group does not belong to the extra-parliamentary left. However, RåFILM organizes the festival in collaboration with a few partners such as ABF, Byggnads, IF Metall, LO Malmö, and SAC amongst others. These groups, apart from SAC, also do not belong to the extra-parliamentary left. Nonetheless, when I attended the festival in November of 2019 at Panora, the presence of the extra-parliamentary left was undeniable. Three different leftist groups had tables where they sold merchandise and distributed information about upcoming events. Furthermore, groups had representatives who took part in the panel discussions, on topics such as housing inequality, or the future of trade unions. Thus, although the festival is not primarily organized by the extra-parliamentary left, it remains a public event where the extra-parliamentary left is present, and an event important in the yearly calendar of different groups.

Theoretically, any individual in Malmö or Lund could take part in the events listed above. When I attended these events, I participated in a variety of manners. At demonstrations, I often engaged in a type of follow-along, walking beside informants and asking questions related to the demonstration such as why are we doing this? How is this different from last year? Do you think another type of event would be more beneficial? Kusenbach (2003) points out some of the advantages of the go-along method in an ethnographic project. She notes that this technique, as opposed to a more unstructured ‘hanging out’ with informants, allows the researcher “to observe their informants spatial practices in situ while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time” (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 463). When I walk alongside an informant at a demonstration, I am able not only to observe their actions, but to ask them why specific places seem safe or unsafe. For example, as I walked beside an informant at the May 1st demonstration in 2019, he lit a flare. I was then able to ask him about what made this place appropriate for a flare, why there were fewer flares then last year, and what he saw as the purpose of a flare. At other public events, I have attended at times in the company of informants, and at other times by myself. In either case, I attempted to remain attentive to the meanings and ongoing interactions in the specific context, constantly asking myself the traditional ethnographic question, *what is going on here?* Furthermore, as Smith (1987, p. 90) advocates for, I have consistently attempted to ask myself what “is the social organization that generates these actual properties of experience observed”, looking at what needs to happen so that a demonstration, a film festival, or a lecture can take place.

In asking these questions, and attempting to answer them, I have generally followed the suggestions of DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) regarding field notes. During the course of a specific event, I have attempted to write down ‘jottings’ about specific events, comments, or words that individuals have used or that I have seen. I have done this both in physical form, in a notebook, and in virtual form, on my phone. In taking field notes, I initially, in the exploration phase of my ethnography attempted to describe in as much detail as possible what was going on. As Becker (2008, p. 85) notes, one way to avoid “being trapped in our professionalized categories...is massive detailed description.” With my interest in empirically grounding this study, I initially tried to write down everything going on, from what the participants looked like, to what they wore, to what they said, etc.²⁵ However, as the study progressed, I begin to narrow the focus of my jottings to the concepts and categories that had become more relevant in the process of analysis. At the same time, I have constantly attempted to question these categories and analytical elements, “approaching [them] in a variety of different ways, viewing [them] from different angles, asking many different questions of [them]” and even questioning whether a given empirical occurrence belongs to a specific category (Blumer, 1969, p. 44). As new areas of interest develop, I have sought out further instances of these areas, attempting to gain greater knowledge about their characteristics. When I return home from time in the field, I then develop these jottings into full field notes as soon as possible. In these field notes, I record the setting to the best of my ability, fleshing out the interactions that prompted a jotting and attempting to record as much as possible. Even these full field notes exist in both physical and virtual form. For example, I attended a demonstration in Stockholm in August 2018. On the train ride back from Stockholm to Malmö, I did not have my computer, but did have a notebook and thus wrote out my field notes by hand. While writing by hand likely changed the character of the field notes to some degree, as compared to writing on a computer, it is unclear to me what degree of change occurred. Nonetheless, the materiality probably had some influence on the quality of these full notes, although it is likely impossible to say whether it was positive or negative.

²⁵ It is, of course, true that my own prior conceptions influence my observations and that what I notice is influenced by our professional categories. I have nonetheless tried to avoid this as much as possible. I take this up further in the sections on reflexivity and analysis below.

Private Events

However, I have not only attended, observed, or participated in public events. I have also attended birthday parties, hung out in bars, got coffee, played sports, and put-up posters amongst other things with my participants. Clearly, the general public is not the intended target audience of these events. In general, my guiding principle was to attend anything that I was invited to, accepting any invitation offered, if possible. Some of these contacts have developed into deeper relationships, and I meet several of my informants on a regular basis. These events grant me an opportunity to meet others who may belong to this community, and I utilize them as a means to find more individuals willing to talk to me, as well as a means to observe the constant construction of social reality, where norms are negotiated, upheld, transgressed, and created. For example, often, individuals will discuss the actions of other groups, or discuss the difficulties with maintaining a united front. Or in other cases, as at an 'afterwork' I attended in October 2019, individuals discussed a plan to become 'Trotskyites' and take over The Swedish Union of Tenants²⁶. While this was clearly meant in jest, important identity work was performed about the differences between these extra-parliamentary leftists, Trotskyism, and The Swedish Union of Tenants. This is the type of data that would be inaccessible without an ethnographic, participatory method. Again, I try to adhere to the two principles discussed above. These interactions also allow me to produce field notes.

4.3.3 Interrogating the World

As well as performing the more traditional ethnographic fieldwork, I have also conducted 19 sit-down interviews with individuals involved in leftist politics in Malmö and Lund. Of these, 16 individuals were what I will refer to as core members of the extra-parliamentary left, while 3 were involved with the Left Party. I start with the individuals within the extra-parliamentary left. I classify these individuals as core members, or insiders in Unruh's (1980) terms. All the individuals I interviewed except one were active in at least one extra-parliamentary political group at the time of the interview. Core member here merely means active in an extra-parliamentary group. However, this is an important contrast to draw against individuals who only attend demonstrations, lectures, or parties, but

²⁶ In Swedish, *Hyresgästföreningen*.

who are not active within a group, as I discuss in Chapter 7. The one exception was an individual who was taking a break from involvement in a political group, but this person had been active in extra-parliamentary groups for the preceding 15 years. I chose to focus my interviews on core members for two reasons. First, theoretically, I argue that these individuals are likely to be most aware of not only this community's shared understandings, but also the varying factions within the community (Blee & Taylor, 2002). Furthermore, it is not a stretch to say that the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö and Lund does not exist outside of the interactions between these individuals, and other core members. This is not to say that it would not exist, but only that it exists in its current form because of the relations between the core members of the community.

The second reason for this choice is practical. The difficulties of gaining access to radical political environments are well-known (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015). In line with most other studies on hard-to-reach environments (Heckathorn, 2011; Spreen, 1992), I primarily used a snowball sampling method to locate interview participants. Access to interview participants has largely been facilitated through the use of three different gatekeepers. The position of these gatekeepers was beneficial in allowing me to reach individuals with whom I did not spend much time during the participatory fieldwork, or with whom I had little relation. However, the individuals they suggested that I contact or who they placed me in contact with were all core members, as defined above. Analytically, this suggests certain things about the relations and interactions within this community, but practically, it also means that the interview sample consists of individuals who are organized in political groups (Noy, 2008). Of the three gatekeepers, two were female and one was male. They were between the ages of 27 and 34. They hold different positions in the field. One is key within the extra-parliamentary movement in Malmö, and has a long history of activism within different groups concerned about issues such as housing, anti-fascism, and urban planning, in different locations in Sweden. The second is active within a group largely interested in education and propaganda in Malmö, but did not have a long experience with activism, and had never been in another group in Malmö. The third was an individual not currently active in a political group, but who had been active previously. Utilizing these three different gatekeepers, enmeshed in three mostly separate networks of activism, allowed me access to different areas of this community, and to talk with individuals who, although they define themselves

similarly politically, may not interact with each other often. Two of these individuals were also willing to be interviewed themselves.

I also employed three other strategies in locating interview participants, two of which yielded no participants, and one which yielded multiple participants. First, I contacted a number of groups in Malmö and Lund via email or Facebook and presented both myself and my project, asking if any of their members would be interested in participating in the study. Although this strategy has occasionally led to an email or Facebook chat exchange, it has yielded no individuals interested in participating in an interview. Second, on two occasions, I have presented the ongoing work from this project in talks at Amalthea Bokkafé, once in November 2018, and once in October 2019. At these events, I have provided information about the project, and presented some preliminary results. Each event was attended by between 10 and 20 individuals. While these two talks did not yield any interview participants, they have been important in clarifying who I am within the field, and what I am doing. While I return to this below, several interview participants have mentioned to me that they have heard about these presentations at Amalthea, and that it has encouraged them to take part in the study. Thus, while they may not have directly yielded any interview respondents, they appear likely to have made individuals more open to participating within the project. The third identification strategy in addition to the snowball strategy above was merely asking individuals who I had come to know over the course of the fieldwork if they would be willing to be interviewed. However, I have used this strategy sparingly, and chosen individuals due to their position within the field, particularly regarding areas I believed that my understanding was lacking.

Moving to the actual interview participants, as noted, I have conducted 16 interviews with individuals belonging to the extra-parliamentary left. All of these individuals have been active within groups in Malmö or Lund at some point, with all but one currently active. The 16 individuals belong to a total of seven different groups, with several individuals active within more than one group at the time of the interview. Seven of these individuals are men, eight are women, and one did not identify as either male or female. The youngest informant was in their early 20s and the oldest informant was in their early 40s. However, the majority of the participants were between 25 and 35. At the time of the interviews, most had been politically active for over 10 years, in most cases, stretching back to their mid-teens, and the longest period of activism was over 20 years. Furthermore, none of the participants were originally from Malmö, although several were from other

areas of Skåne. In most cases, individuals were politically active initially in their hometown, prior to moving to the Malmö/Lund area.

The interviews themselves lasted between 58 and 153 minutes, with most taking about 90 minutes. I have conducted the interviews in a number of different locations ranging from the participant's apartment to my apartment to bars or cafes amongst others. In each case, the location was chosen in consultation with the participant, in order to find a location in which they would feel comfortable and were willing to meet with me. In the interviews, I asked participants about their first memories of politics, their first involvement with political action, and the paths their activism had taken. I asked questions relating to how they choose their preferred or current group to be active within, as well as what kind of consequences their activism has had on their lives outside a political environment. Finally, the interviews also covered topics relating to the current political situation, and their images of the future. These interviews can, in many ways, be considered life history interviews, as I use the interviews to attempt to "capture activists' meaning and emphasis rather than record the facts of history" (Blee, 2013). In the interviews, I also asked participants about documents their group had published, which I often brought with me, or about actions their group had taken. During the interview, I encouraged participants to ask me any questions they wished about my own political positions, this study, or about my life history as a means of promoting an open atmosphere and building rapport.

If I now turn to the three interviews conducted with members of the Left Party, while the recruitment strategy was different, the interviews remained largely the same. I wished to interview these members of the left party for three major reasons. First, the left party and the extra-parliamentary left interact, even organizing demonstrations or events together at various times. I thus wished to learn more about these interactions, and even look into the perceptions Left Party members have about the extra-parliamentary left. Second, the Left Party is the closest parliamentary political group to the extra-parliamentary left in ideological terms. I wished to thus investigate how the meaning and practices associated with socialism in these two contexts differed. Finally, the Left Party and the extra-parliamentary left have some crossover in Sweden and some members of the Left Party began their political journeys within the extra-parliamentary left, while the reverse is also true. In terms of recruitment, I contacted the Left Party in Malmö, and they agreed to post information relating to my project within their Facebook groups. Three individuals contacted me and volunteered to be interviewed after

seeing this information. The interviews covered largely the same topics as the interviews with the extra-parliamentary members, with particular emphasis on how the members of the Left Party perceive and interact with groups and individuals in the extra-parliamentary left. I was particularly interested in whether they viewed themselves as belonging to the same, or different movements. The three participants were all between 30 and 40 years old. Two of them were female and one was male. All held elected positions within the Left Party in Malmö. One individual had previously been active within the extra-parliamentary movement, while the other two had only been active within groups affiliated with the Left Party. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and took place at a location chosen in conjunction with the participant, such as a café or restaurant.

All interviews were conducted in Swedish and any quotations within this document are my own translations. In the interests of anonymity, all respondents have received fictitious names and some revealing personal details have been changed when appropriate. In the interviews, I did not ask directly about involvement in any illegal activities, but this nonetheless came up on several occasions. In all of the interviews, I found the participants willing and eager to discuss past actions, current plans, and current ideas and did not experience great difficulty in getting participants to open up. In some cases, the interview participants have been key informants in my more observational field work, and in these cases, I have found that they generally advocate for the same ideas and suggest the same life trajectories as they did in the interviews. This has also allowed me to supplement the narratives in the interviews with other details that have come up in conversations.

4.3.4 Reading the World

The final major source of data within this research project is documents. Documents are an extremely valuable source of information, particularly in regards to political groups and social movements (Lofland, 2017). This choice also falls in line with Blumerian assertion that any source of data the exists on a given social group is desirable. Documents are a form of data that helps me to learn as much as possible about how actors see their social world, and how meanings and social understandings are constructed, reinterpreted, reconstructed and changed. Documents grant more information and more examples of how participants understand not only their own experiences, but also what these

experiences mean in the context of the community. Furthermore, these documents also help to bring to the fore contextual issues, surrounding for example, how the police view the extra-parliamentary movement, or how different groups within the community understand events occurring in other parts of the world. Documents help to highlight how the movement wishes to portray itself to the outside world and provide fertile ground for analysis regarding what is highlighted and what is omitted. Documents also have the major benefit, in contrast to the two other sources of data here, that they can be accessed and read in an office or at home. This should not be undervalued.

There are three major sources of documents here, consisting of internal movement documents, works of fiction, and secondary sources (including government reports, magazines, and academic research). The internal movements documents consist largely of publications from three different groups within the Malmö/Lund area. These groups are Everything for Everyone, AFA, and Organizing Autonomously. Each group was chosen for its prominence within the extra-parliamentary left in Southern Sweden, and due to its frequency of publication. Each group publishes ideological statements with some frequency, and does so in a public, accessible manner either on Facebook, or on their own websites. For example, in February 2020 AFA Malmö published a text entitled “Antifascist Strategies and Radical Societal Change” in which they shared their thoughts on the current societal challenges to the autonomous, anti-fascist movement as well as what some possible solutions may be (AFA Malmö, 2020a). Each group has published a number of similar texts throughout my time in the field. Any documents published after June 2017 are included in this analysis, using the lead up to the demonstrations against the G20 in Hamburg as the starting point of document collection. Beyond documents published by these groups, I have also collected accounts of individuals’ and groups’ participation at demonstrations or other public events. Accounts are often used to “create structures of plausibility, and they also enact persuasion, justification, legitimation, and the like” (Atkinson, 2014, p. 100). They provide examples of sense-making and draw on cultural resources about what should be felt, or what should be thought. In this sense, they are an extremely valuable data source for this project. These accounts of experiences at demonstrations can be found in magazines such as Brand, or on websites such as gatorna.info. Whilst these are the two main data sources of movement, or community, documents, I also include other documents if they are suggested to me by informants, or naturally become

prominent. An example of this relates to several texts published by ARNA, which suggest strategies and ways forward for groups within the autonomous left (see e.g. Autonomous Revolutionary Nordic Alliance, 2017, 2018).

A second source of texts or documents that I use as data within this project relates to works of fiction, with novels such as *Delta gänget* by Salka Sandén or *Brev från en cell* by Henrik Johansson forming the backbone of this area. I argue, in line with Coley (2015), that works of fiction form an important part of social movement narratives. Polletta (1998, p. 422) similarly advocates for the importance of narratives in studying social movements, arguing that “we are especially likely to turn to narrative when we encounter phenomena that are unfamiliar or anomalous” (see also Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2011). Works of fiction help to demonstrate not only how a community sees itself, but also what it sees as the traditional difficulties, reasons for, and solutions to problems encountered either prior to joining the extra-parliamentary left, or in the course of an individual’s activism within this movement. Fictionalized works further demonstrate the typifications possessed by individuals in this community. Works were selected on the basis of recommendation and prominence amongst members of this field. For example, in my initial explorations of the extra-parliamentary left, *Delta gänget* was recommended to me by at least 6 different people. Similarly, *Brev från en cell* was the subject of two separate release events at different extra-parliamentary locations when it was released in fall 2019. Thus, works of fiction form the second group of texts or documents used as empirical material within this study.

The final source of empirical material for this study consists of secondary sources, including government reports, previous research, and other popular reports about the extra-parliamentary left. First, these documents help to contextualize the movement and put it into a historical perspective. For example, Wennerhag and Jämte (2019) on behalf of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) produced a report that not only outlines the changing numbers of protest events by the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden, but also includes interviews and experiences of activists. While this could be considered a form of previous research, and I do treat it as such, the report itself has been a subject of conversation within the extra-parliamentary left. For example, individuals, both in my field notes and online, have suggested that the report contains no information that the community wished to keep secret. In studying the responses of the individuals, it is thus valuable to examine how these interviews construct a

narrative, as well as what may be missing. This can even help to inform my own analysis of my data. The second role these government and news reports play is to highlight the counter-narratives present in the political arena about this group. A useful example of this arises in a report from Rostami et al. (2018) which posits that a substantial portion (over 40%) of the extra-parliamentary left suffers from mental health issues, for instance. Again, this report is discussed and debated within this community and other narratives surrounding mental well-being are highlighted and developed in response to this report. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand why these narratives gain prominence without understanding what they are in response to. Thus, these broader governmental reports help to highlight contextual factors, but at the same time offer counter-narratives to which the extra-parliamentary left responds.

4.3.5 Omissions/Missing Data

Nonetheless, while I have attempted to include and gain access to as much information as possible about this community, there are certain areas and facets of the extra-parliamentary left about which I have not produced data. There are two important missing groups in this data collection, particularly in terms of the interviews. However, starting with the participatory fieldwork, I would suggest that I have attended almost every type of event I am able to, organized by almost every group present in the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö and Lund. Yet, there are certain events that I am not able to attend, such as female and trans separatist events. This means, for example, that I have never been to Take the Night Back in Malmö and there are certain workshops, meetings, and lectures that I cannot attend. While this poses some problems, I have attempted to address this in the interview sample, where 5 individuals have experience organizing in separatist groups. In these interviews, I have asked these participants about their experiences with separatist forms of organizing and how separatist events differ from other types of events within this community. Thus, although I have not attended any of these events, the empirical material still provides some perspective on these events.

The opposite is true of the anarchist flank of the extra-parliamentary left. Here, I have attended numerous demonstrations, book fairs, and lectures given by individuals who identify as anarchists, but none of my interview participants identify as anarchists. This has created some difficulties. For example, in the lead

up to the 1st of May in 2019, there were several conflicts at the organizing meetings between anarchist groups and the other organizers. This was a topic I discussed at length with several of my interview participants, and it was also a recurring topic of conversation in April and May of that year during my participatory field work. While I therefore have data about how the other groups in Malmö perceived the actions and statements of the anarchists, I can say little about how the anarchists made sense of the events and the conflicts. While the anarchist area of the extra-parliamentary community is fairly small, it is still a group with which I have been unable to engage.

A second group missing from the interview sample is individuals under 23 years of age. There are, in the main, two potential reasons for this. First, as Jämte (2017, p. 253) writes, it is particularly difficult to gain access to “younger activists who are still active in the more militant and secretive parts of the movement”. This is a particularly difficult hurdle to overcome, and one of the reasons why most studies done on the Swedish extra-parliamentary left have few participants below the age of 25. However, a second, related issue in accessing individuals under 25 regards their prevalence within the extra-parliamentary left. According to the participants in my fieldwork, the extra-parliamentary left has had difficulties with recruitment throughout the last 5-10 years, and the average age of members of this community has risen. There is some risk in these statements that these activists merely do not interact often with the younger members of the community, but observation at demonstrations, lectures, and other events does suggest that most participants are between 25 and 35. Even if this is the case, however, there are still younger individuals who are active within this community who are not part of the sample. There is a danger, particularly in combination with the lack of anarchists in this sample, that the data therefore risks presenting a more moderate picture of the extra-parliamentary left than may be the case. Nonetheless, I have attempted to keep in mind this risk throughout the analysis process and would argue that my data production process has produced a general picture of the extra-parliamentary leftist community in Malmö and Lund.

4.4 Ethics²⁷

Ethnographic studies are always beset with ethical questions, dilemmas, and problems. This is true in all cases, but perhaps even more true in relation to this specific project, which explores the world of a radical political group, that at times engages in violent actions and illegal activity. Eldén (2020) in her text on research ethics, argues that all stages of the research process must proceed from an ethically informed ground, from choice of topic to method to analysis. I agree with this position. Here, however, I chose to focus on two aspects of the research project, the ethical dilemmas associated with these issues, and how I have reasoned and dealt with these two problems. The first issue surrounds access and consent while the second issue surrounds anonymity.

Beginning with the question of access, Murphy and Dingwall (2007, p. 2226) argue that “ethnographic consent is a relational and sequential process rather than a contractual agreement.” In essence, they wish to highlight that an ethnographic study proceeds according to different norms than a study that involves a one-off meeting with a participant, and thus requires different modes of negotiation than other methods might require. Atkinson (2009, p. 20) similarly notes that we cannot use individualistic modes of consent gathering in an ethnographic study, as we do not enroll individuals within our study, but instead deal “with social actors because they are members of an organization, or are privy to some activity we wish to study.” The question thus becomes how one can proceed ethically in a study of group life, while balancing concerns relating to individual privacy. In a very real sense, it would not be possible to do this study without the consent of a very specific group of individuals. In negotiating access, and maintaining or increasing that access, I have remained attentive to the issue of reciprocation (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012). In other words, I have used my capacities, knowledge, and skills at various times to assist both the ‘movement’ and individuals within this movement. In some cases this amounts to assisting individuals with their university work, serving as a reader or discussant in relation to an upcoming essay they must turn in, while in other cases, it regards helping with translations for organizational documents, texts, or messages. I have also in certain cases sat behind merchandise tables when asked, helping to sell books and merchandise. As a human being, none of this presents any ethical dilemmas. However, as a

²⁷ This research project has received ethical approval from the Swedish review board.

researcher, the risk exists that individuals come to forget that I am conducting a research project, rather than being a member of the community.

I have thus tried to emphasize my role on various occasions and reminded individuals of my role as researcher. Whenever I interact with new individuals, I attempt to make clear my position. I identify myself as a PhD student, describe my research project, and remain open about the fact that I am there to do research. Generally speaking, individuals react positively, and seeing as I am American, often wish to discuss the American left, which enables me to start a discussion on differences and similarities with the Swedish Left. I do not use a consent form, but regard their willingness to continue talking after learning about my role as a form of consent. This, however, can become problematic, particularly in the presence of alcohol and drugs. In general, I have adhered to the belief that while what individuals say while under the influence unavoidably influences my perceptions, ideas, and analysis, none of those quotes should be included in this dissertation, and no personal reveals that occurred in such a setting can ethically be reported here.

Moving to the issue of anonymity, I have guaranteed to all of my informants that I will protect their privacy and prevent others from finding out about their participation to the best of my ability. I have not, however, promised full anonymity as I view this as nearly impossible. For example, in any of the examples drawn from the ethnographic fieldwork, at the very least the other individuals who feature in the narrative will know who they are. It is also likely that a small group of other individuals would be able to figure out who they are. Nonetheless, I attempt to do all in my power to limit the size of this group of individuals, while not compromising the credibility of the research. All names given in this dissertation are fictional and I attempt to limit the specificity of all biographical details. At other times, this means changing the names of individuals in the ethnographic narratives or giving a wide age range for an individual. This also depends on the sensitivity of the information. In cases where I have witnessed illegal actions or participants have described illegal acts in the past, I attempt to minimize all identifying detail. It is important to emphasize that no incidents that would be regarded as serious crimes in Sweden have occurred or been described in the course of the study. The illegal incidents mainly include issues such as putting up posters, the organization of illegal night clubs, and minor conflicts between fascists and anti-fascists. I argue that all of these activities are important in understanding the extra-parliamentary parliamentary left and to not observe

them would restrict the ability of this study to investigate the social organization of this social world. Nonetheless, in the interests of minimizing the possibility of this study harming the individuals involved, I present almost no identifying details in describing these events. In treating decisions regarding access and anonymity in this manner, ethics has remained a living consideration throughout the entire research process, even in the actual act of writing this text.

4.5 Analysis

The question of where analysis begins in research is a difficult one. As Atkinson (2014, p. 58) argues, analysis “is pervasive, starting before and lasting during the fieldwork, as well as being undertaken subsequently.” As I have advocated above, ethnographers should not enter the field without ideas, or without theory. For example, in designing this research project, an inherent assumption exists that extra-parliamentary politics are in some manner different from institutional politics. Furthermore, I did not start this study without ideas, preconceptions, and images of what the empirical world under investigation resembles, and I began with commitments to certain theoretical perspectives, ideas, and concepts. Again, I view this as unproblematic, echoing the assertion of Blumer (1969, p. 36) that “all of us, as scholars, have our share of common stereotypes that we use to see a sphere of empirical social life that we do not know.” Prior to beginning the fieldwork in this project, I had already identified analytical concepts and ideas that I thought might be useful in understanding the extra-parliamentary left. Thus, in some sense, the analysis of this community began prior to conducting fieldwork, based on previous research, previous sociological training, and my knowledge of politics. I, in essence, had an idea of what this might be a case of, as Goffman would say.

At the same time, while I may have entered into the field with ideas, concepts, and theories, I have endeavored to constantly question these ideas and allow the empirical data to act dialectically with the analytical elements. Ethnomethodological precepts remind us that conventional sociological methods, such as ethnography or interviews, often produce “representations... [that] have a tenuous relation to the actual concerns and doings of practitioners and participants” (Pollner & Emerson, 2001, p. 122). Following both Blumer and Schutz, I view it as vital that the more theoretical sociological explanations I

produce are based upon, and connected with, with the actual practices occurring in the field. There is thus a constant movement between the data produced and the sociological understanding, where in constantly questioning the analytical elements I believe to be relevant, I allow the data and my growing understanding of this social world to guide the refinement and choice of appropriate concepts and theories.

Just as I find Blumer's idea of sensitizing concepts to be particularly useful, I also take insights from interpretative sociology into the analysis. In this project, I am interested in investigating the meaning structure of the world of the extra-parliamentary left, and am interested more in the life of the group, than the life of the individual. Hitzler (2005) argues that "the reconstruction of meaning [is] the most general goal of interpretive sociology." Hitzler further argues that interpretive sociology requires texts. Gillan (2008, p. 260) suggests that we should understand the term text "very widely, encompassing human action in general." Gillan, with this understanding of text, advocates for an approach to social movements that incorporates the hermeneutic circle. The interpreter of a text must constantly place that text in relation to the whole, going between the specific and the general in a constant manner. In the analysis, I attempt to do this. I argue that most statements, writings, or actions in this community cannot be understood with seeing them as part of a larger structure of ideas. They require knowledge of the taken-for-granted assumptions and typifications of the community, while in turn, this understanding of the broader community only arises from the texts produced by individuals. Therefore, in the analysis, in a similar dialectical process to that outlined above, I attempt to move beyond the statements or actions of individuals and uncover the underlying meanings and what Gillan refers to as orientational frames, or wider belief structures at play.

Thus, my analysis has proceeded on the basis of these two separate processes. On the one hand, I argue that it is neither desirable nor possible to work ethnographically without already possessing some notion of the theoretical manner in which the world operates. However, this process cannot lose sight of the fact that it is the empirical world that must drive the research. Concepts and understandings must constantly relate dialectically to the actual processes and practices the participants engage in. Similarly, it is not possible to understand isolated acts without also looking at the whole of the setting. Yet, the whole of the setting is made up of those isolated acts, and thus, each can only be understood in relation to each other.

The actual practice of analysis has proceeded as follows. All interviews have been transcribed fully, excluding some minor pauses, hesitations, and silences. I have not used any digital transcription program in this process. As discussed briefly above, field notes have either been taken digitally, and printed, or were written by hand. I have not used any formalized coding procedure, such as that recommended in grounded theory, but have constantly read and re-read the material from the observations, documents, and interviews guided by theoretical ideas and on the basis of new, interesting phenomenon. In doing so, I took further notes and created further documents, grouping together items based on theme or subject and identifying interesting examples. These categories have been revised on a consistent basis as I collect more data, and my understanding of the whole grows.

In presenting the material, the most important alteration regards language. Namely, everything, with very few exceptions, has been translated to English. In this dissertation, essentially every piece of material collected in the process of my fieldwork and analysis was originally spoken or written in Swedish. As a general principle, I have attempted to translate all quotes or texts in a manner that I view as faithful to the meaning of a collection of words, rather than as faithful to the words themselves. For example, the Swedish equivalent to the English phrase ‘to have ice in your veins’ is ‘to have ice in your stomach’, literally translated. It, however, makes little sense in English to say, ‘I have ice in my stomach’ and thus both the more reasonable and accurate translation is to say ‘I have ice in my veins’. The words have changed, but the meaning remains²⁸. However, there are some exceptions to this general principle, where I have left certain words or phrases in Swedish. For example, I leave the words *ossig* and *ossiefiering* in their Swedish form throughout the text. Roughly translated to English, these words would mean social-democratish and social-democratization. Not only are these words exceptionally ungracious and irritating to both read and write, but they also mean nothing resembling the Swedish words. The only context where I have seen a similar word is an ideological one, but it is not a word applicable to behavior, habits, or groups in English. This is not the case in Swedish, and particularly within the community under investigation in this study. Thus, in cases like this, I leave the original word in Swedish, and attempt to describe what it means

²⁸ Notably, this is of course in reference to my own understandings of Swedish and English, and a reader who is more competent in either Swedish or English than I may disagree.

through the analysis process, as a means of not only retaining meaning, but also maintaining the voice of the participants. Even in translation, I attempt to present long quotations as a means of attempting to preserve the original statements and allow the reader a means of hearing the voices of the informants. In the observational examples given, I have attempted to contextualize these as much as possible, with the belief that this grants a fuller picture of the situation described. Yet, as I mentioned above, I use the barest minimum of biographical details to protect the integrity of the informants. I believe this is further warranted due to the analytical strategy, as I do not set out to study the informants as individuals, but rather as members of this group.

4.6 Reflexivity and Ethnography

Having explained, described, and discussed many of the facets of the methodological perspective I have employed throughout this study, I arrive now at the final aspect of this chapter, a brief discussion on the role of the researcher (me) and reflexivity in the process of this research. In an article on peopled ethnography, Gary Alan Fine (2003, p. 54) argues for the necessity of maintaining “an analytic distance from those whose actions I recount.” In his view, this entails treating participants as morally neutral, and in writing, he suggests we should “strive to be marginal, to maintain an *ironic detachment* from informants” (Fine, 2003, p. 54, emphasis original). In this project, and in writing any text, I aim to follow this line. I aim to present a detailed, complicated picture of a social world that does not involve an attempt at providing moral judgements about the actions of the individuals involved in this world, or an overall normative judgement of the world itself. At the same time, as Fine (2003, p. 55) also notes, “every ethnographer has a personal equation that encourages the examination of some groups, while avoiding others.” Hannerz (2013, p. 80) writes similarly that our “ability to remain in the field and across settings [is] dependent on a number of other characteristics...such as my age, gender, [and] ethnic background.”

In my case, I have found my status as a foreigner to be particularly helpful, both in maintaining an analytical distance and in gaining access. As I have not grown up in Sweden, there are a number of facets of Swedish society that remain mysterious to me. I do not share many of the same cultural assumptions nor do I know the way that certain issues should be interpreted. This has been particularly

helpful in two ways. First, I am constantly forced to question what taken-for-granted assumptions might lay behind a statement and must learn the understandings at play in this group in a different way than someone who shared the cultural socialization process might. Second, it also has a legitimating function in my questioning. Individuals expect me to ask questions about aspects of Swedish culture, the Swedish extra-parliamentary left, or the Swedish institutional setting, and are not surprised when I ask about something that they expect others to understand. At times, individuals will even turn towards me while recounting a story and offer an explanation of something that they have referred to. Yet, while it has been helpful in some ways, it also creates a distance in others. Although I am fluent in Swedish, there are situations where I have not understood all that is said, and situations where I found myself unable to understand cultural references, with no ability to ask questions. This is a consistent ethnographic issue, although magnified in relation to language.

Lichterman (2017, p. 39) argues that we, as ethnographers, “need to represent our experience of trying to learn from our inevitable cluelessness” and take “the researcher’s problems (and resolutions) of communication as interesting facts in themselves.” He argues that it is through representing these experiences of failure, miscommunication, and mistakes that we attempt to demonstrate interpretative reflexivity. He contrasts this with just reflections on social position, which he argues “engages a poetics of social fate” (Lichterman, 2017, p. 40). Lichterman wishes to point out that we cannot know which of our social positions (in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) mattered in specific interactions, whereas we can demonstrate how we came to think what we think, and how we came to understand the social life of the group we examine, through showing both successes and failures. Thus, in this dissertation, I attempt to adhere to this type of reflexivity, attempting to give the reader insight into both how I came to the type of claims I make throughout the analysis, and the areas that remain unsure, unanswered, or unexplored. In doing so, I aim to not only “invite readers into a critical dialogue about [my] claims” but also about the process through which the claims are made (Lichterman, 2017, p. 39).

5 The Social World of the Extra-Parliamentary Left

As I noted in the previous chapter, the idea for this dissertation grew out of everyday observation on the streets of Malmö. Walking around the area surrounding Möllevångstorget (Möllan, in everyday language), almost every lamppost is covered in stickers with leftist political messages and the sight of graffiti criticizing police, war, or Swedish or international politicians is not uncommon. It is this area that the extra-parliamentary left calls its own, in Malmö. It is at Möllan that the activities of individuals create the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, and it is in the surrounding bars, streets, and basements that the interactions which create, recreate, and challenge the identities of extra-parliamentary leftists mainly take place. In this chapter, I therefore describe and introduce this social world that forms the site for the interactions, events, and relations which I analyze in the following chapters. However, just as interactions have history, so too do social worlds. Social worlds are also nested. Thus, this chapter begins with an introduction to the Swedish political context, and with a brief overview of historical events and developments that continue to resonate today in the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Second, I look at the current political situation in Sweden, and examine recent trends in political participation. Third, I provide a brief overview of the history of the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden following the advice of Mills that we must consider both biography and history together in to conduct sociological research. I then zoom in on the location of Malmö, discussing the area of Möllevången, and broader trends within the city. Finally, the chapter closes with a presentation of the extra-parliamentary left, discussing the current state of the movement. This chapter, then, provides the necessary historical and contextual detail to understand the empirical events described in the following chapters, and to

properly situate the current activities of the extra-parliamentary left in both their broader societal and historical context.

5.1 The Social Democratic Establishment: Reformism, not Revolution

Sweden, in the most general terms, is a small country in Northern Europe with a population of about 10 million individuals. Sweden established “a parliamentary model of government” in 1918, and implemented full suffrage in 1921, when women received the right to vote (Pierre, 2016, p. 3). Sweden today has eight parties in parliament: the Swedish Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, the Center party, the Conservative Party²⁹, the Green Party, the Social Democrats, and the Left Party. The largest party in the previous election in 2018 was the Social Democrats, who received about 28% of the vote. After months of negotiation, the Social Democrats formed a government together with the Green Party, the Center Party, and the Liberal Party. However, in 2021, the Left Party initiated a vote of no confidence in the government, which succeeded. As of writing, in April 2022, Sweden is currently led by the Social Democrats in a minority government. I return to some of these issues below, in addressing current trends in Swedish politics.

Here, I concern myself with some of the historical developments in Swedish politics which continue to affect the current political environment. Sweden, famously, is (or perhaps more accurately, was) the prototypical example of a social-democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990c; Therborn, 2020). Esping-Andersen (1990b, p. 112) described social-democratic welfare states as states where “the principles of universalism and decommodifying social rights were extended to the new middle classes...the social democrats pursued a welfare state that would promote an equality of highest standards.” Social democracy arrived in Sweden in 1881 when August Palm³⁰ held a speech entitled *What do the Social Democrats want?* outside a hotel in Malmö (Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek,

²⁹ *Moderaterna*, in Swedish.

³⁰ August Palm (1849-1922) grew up in Malmö, prior to living in Germany and Denmark. He is usually credited with introducing social-democratic ideology to a broader public in Sweden on his return from abroad and was one of the original members of SAP.

2020). Social democracy grew to become hegemonic in Sweden, and Sweden has had a government led by the Social Democrats for 78 of the last 101 years. The Social Democratic Party (hereafter, SAP³¹) was formed in 1889 and in these early years, had many conflicts with not only employers, right-wing parties, and royalty but even with other groupings on the left, including communists, syndicalists, and other types of socialists (Jansson, 2012; Misgeld, Molin, & Åmark, 1988). For this dissertation, the conflicts between SAP and various right-wing groupings in the late 1800s and early 1900s are not particularly relevant. However, the conflicts between SAP and other left-wing groups and the conflicts within SAP about the meaning of social democracy are important to understand some of the current conflicts within the Swedish left, and in understanding the current Swedish political context as the social democratic hegemony begins to fade (Theborn, 2018).

There are three specific conflicts that I wish to highlight in this early period of social democracy in Sweden. The first deals with the establishment of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO³²), the second with the 1908 party split, and third involves the 1917 party split, which eventually led to the formation of what today is the Left Party (VP). In the establishment of SAP, Greiff and Lundin (2018, p. 322) argue that “it was mainly the trade union movement that carried the party on its shoulders”, suggesting that the formation of SAP was an organic process that grew out of a lively labor movement. LO was formed in 1898³³ and following “a lively debate, it was decided that the LO trade unions should affiliate with the party” (Greiff & Lundin, 2018, p. 322). At this point in the 1890s, Blake (1960, p. 22) emphasizes that SAP was almost entirely reliant on the trade unions, with “local unions [making] up 90 to 96% of all organizations within the party” while “collectively affiliated unionists made up between 95 and 97% of all Party members.” At the constitutive assembly of LO in 1898, the constitution included a clause that required affiliated groups to also become members in SAP (Blake, 1960). However, this clause was removed from LO’s constitution only two years later, and “the stipulation of formal co-operation” with SAP was abandoned in

³¹ The official name of the party in Swedish is *Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, or Sweden’s Social Democratic Worker’s Party.

³² In Swedish, *Landsorganisationen i Sverige*.

³³ Somewhat unfortunately, Bengtsson and Karlsson (2017, p. 22) note that “socio-institutional change from the 1870s until the 1930s is an under-researched theme in Swedish history” and this section therefore relies heavily on a few references.

1909 (Blake, 1960, p. 38; Åmark, 1988). It is important to note here that while the repeal of this clause removed the compulsory aspect of the LO-SAP relation, it did not remove the possibility for the unions of LO to affiliate themselves and their members with SAP, nor did it make much difference in practice. Most LO members and organizations remained officially affiliated with SAP and “this system of collective membership long provided 75-80 percent of the Social Democratic membership” (Aylott, 2003, p. 371). This practice only truly changed around 1990, almost 100 years after it was established (Aylott, 2003). Even today LO and SAP have an extremely close relationship, and the previous leader of SAP, Stefan Löfven, began his career as a union representative within one of the LO-unions.

The establishment of LO had two major consequences which must be briefly described to properly situate this study. The first is the conflict that led to the establishment of the Central Organization of the Workers of Sweden (SAC³⁴) in 1909-1910 and the second deals with the establishment of what is traditionally referred to as the Swedish model. SAC was founded after the youth group of SAP, *Ungsocialisterna*³⁵, was exiled from SAP which led to formation of a new anarcho-syndicalist party (Kuhn, 2009). In conjunction with the founding of this party (which ceased to exist in the 1960s), Kuhn (2009, p. 1) argues that “the foundation of the predominately anarcho-syndicalist worker’s federation SAC” followed. It is also important to note that SAC was founded in the wake of a failed general strike in Sweden in 1909, where the central organization of LO “was made the scapegoat” and SAC was partly formed “by disenchanted LO members, who were disappointed with how LO had managed the general strike” (Jansson, 2013, pp. 307, 309). The relevant aspect to note for this study is that SAC was explicitly founded in opposition to LO and SAP, and thus the two differing union tendencies have always had a contentious relationship. While SAC never truly challenged LO’s position amongst the workers of Sweden, it did grow to almost 40 000 members in the 1920s, or a size “12% that of LO” (Jansson, 2013, p. 309; Kjellberg, 2017; Kuhn, 2009). SAC also grew extremely quickly in this period, increasing from 696 members in 1910 to over 35 000 in 1925 (Kjellberg, 2017).

LO’s establishment and dominant position on the labor market, in combination with a strong, centrally organized employer’s organization,

³⁴ In Swedish, *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation*.

³⁵ In English, The Young Socialists.

eventually led to the Saltsjöbad agreement and the establishment of the Swedish model (Therborn, Kjellberg, Marklund, & Öhlund, 1978). However, I have no interest in focusing on the specific details of that agreement or the specific practices of Swedish industrial relations. Neither of these aspects of this development are particularly relevant for this study. Nonetheless, there are two aspects of the Swedish model that are particularly relevant for this dissertation. First, from around 1890 until the 1920s, Sweden was amongst the countries in Europe where workers engaged in the most strikes (Åmark, 1988). Starting in the 1920s, however, LO, SAP, and the confederation of employers began to find agreements which led to labor market peace. Korpi and Shalev (1979) describe this transition in numerical terms, noting a marked decrease from the strike-filled 1920s to the general decades of peace that followed. For example, while there were 323 work stoppages in the period between 1920-24, there were only 17 in the five-year-period between 1960-1964 (Korpi & Shalev, 1979, p. 167). The unions of LO not only stopped striking, but shifted towards an ideological understanding based on “the common interests between employers and workers” and downplaying “class conflict” (Jansson, 2013, p. 309). LO began to explicitly guarantee labor market peace, and eventually codified this in the Saltsjöbad agreement. The first important consequence of this agreement is thus that strikes almost entirely disappear from Swedish politics and industrial relations.

The second important consequence is that SAC, and members within SAC, do not always adhere to the Saltsjöbad agreement. SAC maintained its decentralized ideology, continued to engage in strikes, and regarded “LO’s tendency towards centralization and connection to the Social Democratic Party as counterproductive for achieving workers’ goals. It amounted to class betrayal, in their view” (Jansson, 2013, p. 309). This ideological disagreement was codified in the Swedish model. SAC was excluded in practice as a legitimate actor on the Swedish labor market through the agreement, and LO’s understanding of the role of unions became hegemonic. Thus, while union membership remained strong in Sweden (Aylott, 2003; Kjellberg, 2017), it is necessary to emphasize that it was a particular kind of trade union and trade union ideology that was institutionalized in Sweden.

There are two other points regarding the early development of social democracy and SAP in Sweden that are necessary to discuss, regarding the 1908- and 1917-party splits. Both splits revolve around the questions of ideology, tactics, and potential allies. In the early days of the party, “parliamentarians and

revolutionaries sat side-by-side at the first congresses and learned to formulate programs and resolutions that had enough room for both” (Molin, 1988, p. 313, own translation). Ahn (1996, p. 159) argues that the party had enough room for both reformists and revolutionaries because “Swedish social democrats interpreted Marx’s historical materialism in the same way. That is, it was only after the development of capitalism that workers would voluntarily join a socialist revolution.” For these early social democrats, a socialist society was only possible after capitalism had developed to a certain stage, and thus, capitalism was necessary for the moment. However, Ahn (1996) suggests that social democrats, whether reformist or revolutionary, were united in opposing violence in contrast to anarchists. He argues that while Hjalmar Branting³⁶ and Axel Danielsson³⁷ are usually portrayed as representing opposing tendencies in the fledgling social democratic movement, “they opposed in common the usage of violence as a means of revolution” (Ahn, 1996, p. 161). This is reflected in a resolution passed at a party congress in 1891, where the social democratic leadership (including Palm, Branting, and Danielsson) condemned “anarchism as anti-social and as an extreme form of bourgeois liberalism” (Hentilä, 1979, p. 118). It is partly these opinions on violence and anarchism that eventually led to the exclusion of *Ungsocialisterna* in 1908, since they were regarded as essentially anarchists, rather than social democrats. What I want to emphasize in terms of this dissertation is that already in 1891, SAP, while still a revolutionary movement itself, attempted to distance itself and de-legitimize the ideology and tactics which the extra-parliamentary left still espouses today. Hentilä (1979, p. 177) argues further that “the most important reason the party excluded anarchists was that they created an uncomfortable publicity amongst the bourgeoisie.” SAP began to seek allies and coalition partners amongst the liberals and the bourgeoisie, recognizing these groups as legitimate, if not desirable, political actors in contrast to anarchists.

³⁶ Hjalmar Branting (1860-1925) was the first SAP member of Parliament, and eventually, the first Social Democratic Prime Minister of Sweden. He was from Stockholm and is usually understood as representing the more moderate portion of the early social democratic movement.

³⁷ Axel Danielsson (1863-1899) was an early social democratic organizer, active primarily in Malmö and Stockholm. He had many conflicts with Branting, both ideological and tactical, and is usually portrayed as representing the more radical portion of the early movement.

This development is reflected even in further in the SAP split of 1917³⁸. Molin (1988) provides a useful overview of these developments. He argues that the cause of the split was not necessarily leftist ideological conflicts, but the SAP's inability to unite in questions surrounding militarism, in the shadow of World War I. SAP, by this time, had achieved representation in parliament and was now the second biggest party in the second chamber³⁹. Molin (1988, p. 320) suggests that the party realized that "to gain influence in parliament SAP needed to unite around a national political strategy in cooperation with the liberals." As SAP pursued this strategy in the 1910s, he notes that SAP "became an integrated part of the political system" as a result (Molin, 1988, p. 321). Hentilä (1979) similarly locates the end of the revolutionary period of SAP in the 1910s. SAP discovered that they could achieve reforms of Swedish society in combination with liberal groups and parties (Molin, 1988). The party became fully reformist at this point, and the final major early split within SAP occurred. Members of SAP who were against these developments left the party and founded a new party called *Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiet*. After a number of name changes, this party still exists today in the form of the Left Party (Hermansson, 2010).

Although these events occurred over 100 years ago, I argue that they are important in understanding several features of social democracy and SAP which came to dominate not only Swedish politics, but Swedish society. I do not, however, wish to suggest that we can draw straight lines to the revolution-reformist conflicts we see today, or explore the current strategies of SAP through reading party resolutions from 1891. Nonetheless, certain institutionalized features of the Swedish political environment are a consequence of these conflicts. First, the close connection between LO and SAP is unavoidable, and many participants in this study regard them as essentially the same organization. Partly, this is due to their historical relation, but it also revolves around ideology, and the way both organizations have interacted with their more revolutionary counterparts. In institutionalizing the Swedish model, LO and SAP delegitimized SAC as a political actor, and stigmatized SAC's main tactics in their informational

³⁸ There were, of course, several splits in social democratic parties across Europe in or around 1917, in the wake of the Russian revolution. While this development was important in the Swedish split, Molin (1988), at least, suggests that the split had been in the making for some time, and the Russian revolution was not the cause in Sweden.

³⁹ Until 1970, Sweden had two houses of Parliament. The second chamber (*andra kammaren*) was elected by popular vote, while members of the first chamber were chosen by local politicians.

and educational campaigns. Strikes mostly disappeared from Swedish industrial relations. Furthermore, LO promoted a strategy of cooperation with employer organizations, rather than with other labor organizations. We see similar tendencies reflected in the creation and institutionalization of SAP. SAP excluded anarchists and stigmatized the use of violence at a very early point in its history, seeking better relations with liberal and bourgeois groups in Swedish society, rather than cooperation with other leftist actors. Swedish social democracy is built upon these tendencies, and it is these understandings that became hegemonic. In attempting to understand the political context of the extra-parliamentary left, it is therefore necessary to first understand the conflicts and processes which led to the creation of the Swedish social-democratic welfare state and its unique form, which continues to shape the society and social worlds in which the extra-parliamentary left acts today.

5.2 The Political Landscape: A Slow Rightward Shift

While the history of social democracy in Sweden may be important, I now leave behind this history for the moment and turn to the Swedish political environment of the 2010s. In discussing the current political landscape, there are two important features to highlight. First, over the last 40 years, political parties have consistently moved rightwards ideologically, and the radical-right has exploded in popularity and influence, best symbolized by the rise of the Sweden Democrats (SD). Second, patterns of political behavior in Sweden have some important differences to those in other countries, with more female participation and a more protest-inclined population. In this section, I therefore briefly discuss these developments.

As I noted above, Sweden currently has eight parties in parliament after the 2018 election. Like most other European countries, one of these parties, the Sweden Democrats, falls generally under the label of populist radical right parties (Mudde, 2013). In 2018, SD received about 18% of the vote and became the third largest party in the parliament. SD only entered parliament in 2010, ending a long period where Sweden was “thought of as an “exceptional case” since there were no representatives of the radical right in the national parliament”⁴⁰ (Elgenius

⁴⁰ A different radical right party, *Nydemokrati*, was in parliament between 1991-1994, but this was an exception rather than the rule. See Rydgren (2002) and Rydgren (2010).

& Wennerhag, 2018, p. 146). Rydgren and Van der Meiden (2019, pp. 440-441) suggest that the rapid increase in support for SD should be understood in relation to four separate factors: the decline of class politics in Sweden, the politicization of immigration, the convergence of SAP and the Conservative Party, and SD's manner of distancing itself from its "neo-fascist past." Oskarson (2015, p. 256) argues that while the importance of class has decreased over time in Swedish voting patterns, "it is still too early to abandon class voting as an important factor behind party choice in Sweden." However, in contrast to previous periods where the working class mostly voted for SAP, today there is an "overrepresentation of Sweden Democrats in the working class" (Oskarson & Demker, 2015, p. 646). Rydgren and Van der Meiden (2019, p. 442) therefore argue that one of the most important factors in the rise of SD is "weakened alignment" between SAP and voters in the working class.

The weakening connection between SAP and the working class helps symbolize the convergence of SAP and the Conservative Party. Oscarsson and Holmberg (2016, p. 262) suggest that there is an apparent rightward shift in the ideology of Swedish voters since the 1970s, and that a "slow and gradual rightward spin of the political turntable is visible." The main consequences of this rightward shift are most apparent within SAP. Therborn (2020) argues that the height of leftist policy in Sweden was the 1960s and 1970s. However, starting in 1982, he posits that SAP began to turn rightwards, and that "Social Democratic and bourgeois politicians shared the interpretation of both economic crises" of the 1970s and 1990s in Sweden (Therborn, 2020, p. 165). As a result of these interpretations, Therborn (2020, p. 165) argues that SAP politicians adopted policies that led "to a rapid increase in inequality" to the point that "the inegalitarian turn from 1982 on has wiped out the whole post-World War II income equalization in Sweden." Therborn, here, suggests that since 1982, there are few substantial differences in economic policy between SAP and the Conservative Party. As a result, he contends that Swedish society is characterized by ever-increasing inequality and insecurity.

In this study, these developments are particularly important. The rightward turn in Swedish politics influences the political landscape in which the extra-parliamentary left acts, and further limits their ability to cooperate with or even interact with other political actors in society. Furthermore, this rightward trend renders anti-capitalist ideas even more deviant, particularly as social-democratic ideology begins to disappear from Swedish society.

The final point worth discussing regarding general ideological trends in Swedish politics encompasses SD's attempts to distance itself from its past. Although radical right parties were uncommon in parliament prior to 2010, radical right movements were not uncommon in Swedish society (Löow, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). This is most apparent in the growth of a "violent Neo-Nazi movement...in conjuncture with a racist skinhead subculture starting in the mid-1980s" (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2019, p. 255). SD itself "originated from an extreme right-wing milieu" in 1988⁴¹ (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019, p. 450). While radical right political parties may not have been visible prior to 2010, there was still a "wave of everyday racist violence engulfing Sweden by the late 1980s" (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2019, p. 257). Particularly in terms of Chapter 7, this should not be forgotten. Many of the individuals involved with the extra-parliamentary left grew up in a political environment characterized by the presence of radical-right movements, and particularly in regards to SD, "the electoral success of the far right has also meant that the anti-fascist movement has seen some of its perceived adversaries enter parliamentary politics" (Jämte, 2017, p. 250). While SD has only recently entered parliament, it did not emerge from nowhere, but rather from a living political movement with Swedish society.

While SD's rise perhaps symbolizes the rightward turn in Swedish politics best, SAP has also consistently moved rightward on economic issues, and increasingly on social issues over the last 40 years (Hinnfors, Spehar, & Bucken-Knapp, 2012). The mainstream Swedish political environment can be classified as characterized by "increasing economic inequality, labor-market as well as political polarization, and the increased electoral support for nationalist and anti-immigrant ideas" (Elgenius & Wennerhag, 2018, p. 140).

Turning away from ideological developments in Swedish politics, it is important to also consider patterns of political participation in Sweden. Adman (2009) notes that one of the most unique aspects of political participation in Sweden is that participation tends to be almost equal in terms of gender, in contrast to many parts of the world where participation is characterized by a gender imbalance. Nonetheless, although Sweden is a country with high voter turnout (87% in the last election) some disparities in voting behavior still exist. Öhrvall (2015, p. 243) notes that "voting is most frequent among married people

⁴¹ See Widfeldt (2008) for a longer description of SD's origins.

or cohabitees, white-collar workers, the employed, the well-educated, and those with higher incomes.”

If we turn towards demonstrating or protesting, Wennerhag (2017b, p. 348) argues that Sweden has “one of the more protest-experienced populations in Europe.” However, he goes on to note that although individuals in Sweden may be more likely to imagine protest as something they might partake in, “those engaging in such activities on a more regular basis are fewer” (Wennerhag, 2017b, p. 348). In terms of the composition of protestors, Wennerhag (2017b, p. 350) finds “young, well-educated, and foreign-born” individuals are more likely to engage in demonstrations, while men and women are almost equally likely to attend a manifestation. He further notes that individuals who identify as leftist are more likely to demonstrate. These trends in participation are similar for almost all demonstrations in Sweden, almost regardless of the subject of a demonstration addresses. For example, Peterson, Wahlström, and Wennerhag (2018, p. 1163) find the participants in pride parades are “overwhelmingly from the middle strata, highly educated, young, and are politically left oriented” while Emilsson, Johansson, and Wennerhag (2020) examine participants in climate strikes and find even here that individuals tend to identify as middle class, have university education, be young, and align themselves with left-wing political parties.

While these patterns are not particularly helpful in helping us to understand who extra-parliamentary leftists are, they do further illuminate the Swedish political context. Individuals who participate politically in Sweden tend to be well-educated and middle- or upper-class, while those who attend demonstrations are also often young and left-wing. There are almost no gender differences in participation, however. Particularly Wennerhag’s work suggests that demonstrations should be regarded as a normal or conventional political activity in Sweden, rather than something out of the ordinary. Having examined both the historical and present-day political context of Sweden, I therefore now turn towards the specific social world of the extra-parliamentary left, beginning with a brief historical overview.

5.3 The Extra-Parliamentary Left in Sweden: A Brief History

Previous research usually locates the birth of the modern extra-parliamentary leftist movement in Sweden in the 1980s (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2017; Jämte, 2013; Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015). However, as I discussed above, at least one organization in the extra-parliamentary left, SAC, has its roots in the period around 1910, when former members of SAP and LO split with these organizations. SAC still exists today, and currently has about 3000 members (Kjellberg, 2017). Nonetheless, although anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism were vibrant movements around the turn of 20th century, each went into a decline in Sweden and were not truly revived again until the 1980s (Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015). In terms of other forms of anti-capitalism, radical leftist politics in Sweden was dominated in the 1960s and 1970s by Maoist, Trotskyite, Stalinist, and Leninist groups. However, these groups were often vulnerable to the ruling Social Democratic party, as, for example, in the case of Vietnam war protests, where P. Johansson (2010, p. 240) suggests the Olof Palme⁴² “won a political platform for himself by breaking the Maoist hegemony over Sweden’s young leftists.” While this statement is debatable, the major leftist movements of the 1960s and 1970s have little connection to the modern day extra-parliamentary movement, in contrast to most other western European countries.

Instead, in the 1980s, an extra-parliamentary movement arose largely out of two linked developments. First, Sweden in the 1980s saw a wave of squatting, particularly in Stockholm and Gothenburg. The squatters aimed to create free spaces, and emphasized the right to housing for all (Polanska, 2017). Peterson, Thörn, and Wahlström (2018) suggest that these squatters were particularly inspired by the BZ movement in Europe and that they also had links to the punk movement in Sweden. Jämte and Sörbom (2016, p. 105) go even further, explicitly arguing that the growth of the punk movement in Sweden “revitalized” the anarchist movement, and most importantly, introduced a new generation of activists into the environment. These authors also suggest that not only were Swedish activists inspired by other movements in Europe, but that personal

⁴² Olof Palme (1927-1986) was the leader of SAP from 1969 until 1986. He was twice prime minister of Sweden and was assassinated in 1986 during his second period as prime minister. His assassination has never been solved and remains a cultural touchstone in Sweden.

contacts existed and activists from Sweden, Denmark, and Germany travelled “across borders to aid in each other’s causes” (Jämte & Sörbom, 2016, p. 106). It is worthwhile to note here that while the core of this movement consisted of anarchists, it also gathered individuals from other strands of radical leftist politics, such as radical feminists, syndicalists, and environmentalists. At the same time, at least through the 1980s, these mainly anarchist squatters were largely non-violent and keen to avoid conflict with the police (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2017; Peterson, Thörn, et al., 2018).

The second important development in the 1980s was the rise of the far-right in Sweden. The number of right-wing groups, such as *Keep Sweden Swedish* and the *Sweden Democrats*, in Sweden increased and “neo-Nazism in Sweden gained notoriety for its violent style of street politics” (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2017, p. 160; Peterson, Thörn, et al., 2018). While the 1980s saw some forms of conflict between leftist groups and neo-Nazis, it is not until 1991 that this resistance becomes more organized. Two sites are particularly important in this year, Stockholm and Lund. Starting with Stockholm, Jämte (2013) argues that the first militant anti-racist group, *The Action Group against Racism*, was founded in April of 1991. Members of the group were largely individuals with experience from the squats of the 1980s and, in Jämte’s (2013, p. 286) words, “a collection of Iranian communists.” The group viewed racism as a consequence of the material conditions of Swedish society, and argued that the racism of fascist groups differed only in degree, rather than form, from the racism of the institutional political system. Around this time, interest in anti-fascist forms of organizing in Germany and England had grown, and an individual from Germany had been invited to hold a series of lectures in Sweden. This individual “emphasized the importance of organizing in an independent, democratic grassroots movement which acted against more than just racism, while the active members needed also to realize that they fought racism and other forms of oppression for their own sake, not just in solidarity with immigrants” (Jämte, 2013, pp. 286-287, own translation). This individual further argued that individuals could not rely on the state or the police to protect them from fascist violence.

In this context, in the lead-up to the demonstrations and counterdemonstrations surrounding the 30th of November in Stockholm, the name Anti-Fascist Action is used for the first time in Sweden. It is this date that links the events in Stockholm and Lund. For several years, neo-Nazis had organized marches in Stockholm and Lund “commemorating the death of King

Charles XII” who died in battle on the 30th of November in 1718 (Brink Pinto & Pries, 2017, p. 160). Shifting from Stockholm to Lund, while there had been various attempts at resistance to the march in the preceding years in Lund, 1991 was the first militant attempt at preventing the neo-Nazi demonstration. Like the developments in Stockholm, international contacts played a key role. Brink Pinto and Pries (2013, p. 40, own translation) argue that in the spring and summer of 1991, younger, militant activists in Malmö and Lund broke with what they say as “an unsuccessful radical culture and pacifist anarchism” and started to refer to themselves as belonging to the autonomous movement. In planning their opposition to the march in November, these activists made contact with a group of squatters in Copenhagen to learn from and use the militant tactics the Danish activists had developed in their own struggles. Brink Pinto and Pries (2013, p. 72) estimate that about 150 Danish activists took part in the events in Lund in 1991. In both Lund and Stockholm, the counterdemonstrations around the 30th of November used militant methods, and each was ultimately seen as successful.

Arguably, in the wake of these two counterdemonstrations, the extra-parliamentary, or autonomous, movement was born in its modern form. Brink Pinto and Pries (2017, p. 165, emphasis original) argue that “in Southern Sweden the pacifist anarchist scene was displaced by the autonomous left almost overnight in the wake of the blockade in Lund” and that many of the activists they interviewed saw this counterdemonstration as “*the* foundational moment” of the new extra-parliamentary leftist movement. Following the counterdemonstrations in Lund and Stockholm, Jämte (2013, p. 291) suggests that that many politically active individuals began to seek contact with those in other cities, at “hardcore or punk concerts, demonstrations, or other forms of political activity.” Eventually, these contacts led to the founding of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) in Sweden in 1993 at a gathering of about 70 “active anti fascists from between 10 and 15 towns⁴³” (Jämte, 2013, p. 292).

The establishment of AFA was crucial for the subsequent development of the extra-parliamentary left, and in the years leading up to 2001, AFA came to play an almost hegemonic role within this movement, both in terms of ideology and tactics. At the founding meeting in 1993, activists inspired by libertarian socialist,

⁴³ AFA’s own description of this event suggests that over 20 different anti-fascist groups were gathered at this meeting. It is unclear whether this means there was more than one group from several towns at the meeting, or if AFA’s official recollection contradicts Jämte’s data (Antifascistisk Aktion, 2020).

anarchist, and autonomous environments decided that AFA “would be organized based on decentralized and anti-hierarchical principles and that decisions would be made on the basis of consensus or through direct democracy procedures” (Jämte, 2013, p. 292). Jämte, in his dissertation on anti-racist movements in Sweden, highlights several important features of AFA’s early years. He argues that by 1995, AFA consisted of 20 local groups with a core of 200-300 activists. Importantly, a number of these activists had previously been active in other movements, ranging from the youth organization of the left party to feminist groups to other anti-racists networks. One consequence of this flood of activists was that they brought their organizational culture with them (Jämte, 2013, pp. 292-295). Jämte (2013, p. 295) argues that, as a result, “activists became more and more structured, disciplined, and informed.” In this period, AFA largely focused on denying far-right movements a place on the streets and on destroying the white power cultural environment, often with violence. The activists interviewed in Jämte’s study view this period as successful and suggest that perhaps their biggest victory was the end of the Swedish Democrats as a street movement⁴⁴ (Jämte, 2013, pp. 311-313).

Ideologically, two theoretical developments were particularly important. The first involves the rise of the ‘triple-oppression’ thesis⁴⁵, which suggests that activists should focus not only on class, but also on gender and race. The triple-oppression thesis had important practical consequences for the extra-parliamentary environment. Jämte (2013) contends that the triple-oppression thesis gave the movement an ideological framework through which it could bind together different ‘one-question’ groups⁴⁶. With this framework, AFA created a ‘mini-platform’ which stated that AFA should be “a libertarian socialist movement which fights sexism, racism, capitalism, and homophobia” (Jämte, 2013, p. 318). Under or around this platform, a coherent movement developed in Sweden.

The second important theoretical development in this fledgling movement was when activists came to view fascism in relation to the surrounding society, rather than as an isolated movement. Within AFA, fascism became understood as a

⁴⁴ In the mid-1990s, SD changed its political strategy radically, abandoning openly racist groups and no longer attempting to organize marches on the streets.

⁴⁵ This text from Viehmann (1990) is generally credited with introducing this theory into the Swedish environment.

⁴⁶ Groups that focus only one issue i.e., fascism, animal rights, etc.

movement that defends and strengthens already existing power structures in society and which was connected to the broader right-wing political turn (Jämte, 2013, pp. 323-327). AFA, and the broader extra-parliamentary movement, saw the established political parties as responsible for the increase in right-wing policies and what they viewed as the increasing acceptance of racism in Sweden. This understanding further strengthened their resistance to the institutional political system and hindered opportunities for cooperation with other, parliamentary groups (Jämte, 2013, pp. 327-328, 331-335).

AFA's successes against neo-Nazi and fascist groups in the early and mid-1990s was regarded by activists as leading to the disappearance, or at least fading, of extreme right-wing groups from public spaces. One consequence of this development was a shift from public confrontations between anti-fascist and fascist activists to what Jämte calls private confrontations. He suggests that the situation developed into something resembling "a gang war between two marginalized subcultures" (Jämte, 2013, p. 342). In the lead up to 2001, AFA's activity and numbers sank from their height in the early 1990s and the network began to lose influence within the extra-parliamentary left. Nonetheless, in the early days of the modern extra-parliamentary movement in Sweden, AFA played a crucial role in the development of not only ideology and tactics but even organizational culture and form. It is, however, necessary to remember that AFA was (and is) not a monolithic entity. It is a loosely organized network of groups throughout Sweden, and there were differences between groups in, for example, Stockholm and Southern Sweden. Brink Pinto and Pries (2013, p. 167), for example, argue that while groups in Stockholm focused more on day-to-day control of public space, groups in Southern Sweden "tended to make public, collective, defensive claims on public space." Nonetheless, the developments outlined here occurred generally throughout AFA during the 1990s, to a greater or lesser degree.

Several of these developments are particularly important to keep in mind in terms of this dissertation. First, the 'mini-platform' developed in the 1990s remains the platform that unites various groups in the extra-parliamentary left. As I explore further in this chapter (see 5.5), groups continue to identify themselves as libertarian socialists and see themselves as fighting against sexism, capitalism, racism, and homophobia. Second, the organizational culture developed when activists joined AFA continues to resonate even today, as I explore further in

Chapters 7 and 8. Although these events happened almost 30 years, they continue to resonate in the activities of the extra-parliamentary left today.

Nonetheless, if at least the early 1990s were a period of upswing for the extra-parliamentary left, the events surrounding the European Union summit in Gothenburg in 2001 form something of a before and after for the extra-parliamentary movement in Sweden. The events themselves are not as important as the reaction, both within and outside of the extra-parliamentary left, but in June 2001 a series of riots took place at this EU summit⁴⁷. In the aftermath, the extra-parliamentary left (and particularly AFA) suffered the blame for the chaos at the summit, and many activists “suffered harsh legal penalties” (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015, p. 714). Furthermore, Peterson, Thörn, et al. (2018, p. 415) contend that there is “some evidence that the state repression during and after the event led to feelings of hopelessness, and even demobilization, in parts of the Swedish left-wing extra-parliamentary milieu.” In response to the chaos in Gothenburg, the Swedish police re-organized and reconsidered their policing tactics, and there was a period of increased state repression against the extra-parliamentary left (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015; Peterson, Thörn, et al., 2018). Partly due to the increased repression and partly as a response to the delegitimization of tactics employed in the 1990s, the collective identity of the extra-parliamentary left changed (Jämte et al., 2020).

Jämte et al. (2020, p. 19) argue that the extra-parliamentary left turned towards everyday life, focusing on “small-scale acts of disobedience.” In contrast to the early 90s where the triple-oppression thesis was prominent, “the class struggle was now given primacy over other social conflicts” while “autonomist Marxist concepts such as ‘the social factory’ and ‘immaterial labor’ expanded the analysis of labor and exploitation to all spheres of society” (Jämte et al., 2020, p. 20). However, towards the end of the 2000s, “a large wave of squatting swept the country in 2008 and 2009” (Polanska, 2017, p. 59). Polanska (2017, p. 59) suggests that “squatting attempts were often initiated by youths and students striving for a free space.” Jämte et al. (2020, p. 21) argue that these squats were positively received and regarded in the extra-parliamentary left, as actions “which combined transgressive but nonviolent tactics with more transparent organizational forms in order to reach out to broader audiences.” These squats

⁴⁷ See for example Wijk (2001) or Wijk (2002) for first-hand accounts of the events as well as a summary. See even Müller (2009) for a more analytical perspective on the riots.

also served as mobilizing events, and many of the participants in this study took part in this wave of squatting.

In the history of the extra-parliamentary left, several distinct stages can be identified. After an upswing in the early 1990s, the events in Gothenburg forced extra-parliamentary leftists to reorganize and adjust their strategies, turning more towards nonviolent actions and a focus on everyday life. As I explored in Chapter 1 (see 1.4), the current movement has turned more towards openness, and a focus on collaboration with other actors while still maintaining a distinct collective identity. Yet, it is important to remember that these views and ideas about violence remain bound up in the events in Gothenburg, and that while 2010 may have marked a new movement period, the extra-parliamentary left remains linked to its past not only in terms of tactics, but even in terms of organizational culture and ideology.

5.4 The Place: Malmö and Möllan⁴⁸

The main physical setting for the events described in the following chapters is the area of Möllevången, in Malmö. Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden, with a population of about 350 000. Malmö lies in the province of Skåne, Sweden's southernmost province, and is often referred to as part of the Greater Copenhagen region. The Öresund Bridge connects Malmö with Copenhagen, and it is about a 40-minute train ride from Malmö's central station to Copenhagen's central station. As I noted above, Malmö was the site of the first public social democratic event in Sweden, when August Palm held his speech. In the 1880s, Malmö was the site of many firsts in Swedish social democracy, with the establishment of the first Swedish Workers Association in 1882, the first socialist women's organization in 1888, and the establishment of both the first *Folkets Park* (People's Park) and *Folkets Hus* (People's House) in Sweden (Billing, Olsson, & Stigendal, 2010). In the following years, a strong labor movement developed in Malmö, particularly in the neighborhoods of Lugnet, Östra Förstaden, and from the 1920s in Möllevången (Billing, Olsson, & Stigendal, 2010). SAP took power in Malmö

⁴⁸ For longer introductions to Malmö or Möllan, see Gustafsson (2022), Vall (2007), or Hansen (2019).

in 1919 and has held power in the city until the present day, with two brief interruptions⁴⁹ (Hansen, 2019; Vall, 2007).

However, Malmö also serves as a useful example of the rightward turn in SAP since the 1980s. Although SAP continues to hold power in the city, Baeten (2012, pp. 22, 40) argues that Malmö today is “one of the frontrunners in the neoliberalization of urban Sweden” and that there are “growing social problems in the city of Malmö with its sizeable concentrations of deprivations in certain neighborhoods.” Pries (2020, pp. 252, 251) emphasizes the “active role of the municipal administration in this process” and notes that “in academia, Malmö is mostly associated with destructive tendencies related to neoliberal urbanism.” In recent years, Malmö is the municipality with the highest rate of unemployment in Sweden, and almost 20% of Malmö’s population is classified as at risk of poverty, in comparison with a national average of about 9% (Gustafsson, 2022). Malmö also has a comparatively foreign and young population compared with other Swedish municipalities. About 30% of Malmö’s population was born abroad while the average age of residents of Malmö was about two years below the national average in 2011 (Baeten, 2012; Salonen, 2012).

The activities of the extra-parliamentary left occur mainly in or around the area of Möllevången, or Möllan, in Malmö. In the center of this area lies Möllevångstorget, a large, central square that is usually the starting point for demonstrations or marches, such as on the 1st of May or the 8th of March. As I noted above, a strong labor movement developed in Möllevången in the 1920s, and Hansen (2019, p. 157) argues that in this time, “since Möllevången was the neighborhood in which many organized and politically active workers lived, it was *the* location for many workers’ demonstrations.” However, the neighborhood experienced a period of decline around 1950. Hansen (2019, p. 158) suggests that Möllan “became a place for stigmatized groups and activities in society” and that “the neighborhood became a place with a high level of tolerance for the ‘different’, and a place in which ‘different’ people could live relatively isolated without having to continuously be confronted by ‘normality’.” The participants in Hansen’s study suggest that this is still the case today. However, over the last 20-30 years, Möllevången has begun to experience gentrification. Although, Möllan continues to have a large-share of foreign-born residents, “there is also a category of residents, whose numbers are increasing, who have a middle-class background and

⁴⁹ These interruptions occurred from 1985-1988 and from 1991-1994.

predominately support left-wing parties” (Hansen, 2019, p. 166). In some of the voting districts around Möllevången, support for the Left Party reaches over 40%, compared with less than 10% nationally. Some of the participants in this study describe Möllan not only as the center of the left-wing movement in Malmö, but as the center of the entire Swedish left-wing movement. Many of the participants in this study live in the Möllevången area, and several extra-parliamentary locales are located here. In the coming chapters, most of the events described take place in this area, which both historically and today has been a home and a refuge to left-wing movements in Sweden.



Description: The Öresund Region



Description: Mollévangstorget. The Statue in the middle is called *Arbetets Ära*, and was designed to honor the labor movement.

5.5 The Extra-Parliamentary Left Today

Having explored the historical and geographical context of the extra-parliamentary left, I now turn towards the current state of the extra-parliamentary left in both Sweden and Malmö. In an article from 2015, Magnus Wennerhag suggests that the extra-parliamentary leftist movement in Sweden consists of about 5,000 individuals (Piotrowski & Wennerhag, 2015). He bases this claim on interviews with activists, government reports, and reports from the mainstream media. It is, however, almost impossible to create an exact count of the number of individuals associated with this movement, both due to practical difficulties but also due to theoretical difficulties. The boundaries of the extra-parliamentary left are porous, and the ones I draw in this study are not necessarily the same as the ones Wennerhag draws. Furthermore, the question of who does and does not belong to the extra-parliamentary left remains an inherently analytical or political question. Here, it is difficult for me to make comments about the number of extra-parliamentary leftists in Sweden, as I have not conducted fieldwork in other areas of Sweden. Nonetheless, in talking with participants, estimates are usually placed around Wennerhag's number, although it is entirely dependent on how an individual defines an extra-parliamentary leftist.

Turning more towards the view of the Swedish authorities, in the last 15 years the Swedish government has developed the term 'violence-affirming extremism.'⁵⁰ The term is used to describe "movements, ideologies, or environments which do not accept a democratic societal order and promote violence to achieve their goals"⁵¹ (Skolverket, 2020). The Swedish Security Service (Säpo) identifies three different extremist environments in Sweden, one of which they call the autonomous environment (Säkerhetspolisen, 2020). Nonetheless, even in Säpo's publications, the term autonomous remains vaguely defined. In various publications, four different groups are often named as 'violence-affirming extremists': Everything for Everyone, SUF, Anti-Fascist Action, and the Revolutionary Front (see e.g. Kaati, 2018; Lundstedt, Billinger, & Jonsson, 2016;

⁵⁰ In Swedish, *våldsbejakande extremism*.

⁵¹ It is worth noting that this term is not defined legally in Sweden.

Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019). The Revolutionary Front ceased to be active around 2015, but the other groups remain active throughout Sweden. However, it is more accurate to refer to each of these groups as networks, as there is no true national group. Instead, each is made up of different local groups. Everything for Everyone, for example, has groups in at least Malmö, Stockholm, and Gothenburg while AFA's website suggests that it has at least 10 different local groups. Recalling the work of Jämte (2013) above, this is a clear decline from the 20 local groups which were a part of AFA in the mid-1990s. Generally, this is the case broadly within the extra-parliamentary left. Wennerhag and Jämte (2019) use protest event data to show that not only has the number of protests from the extra-parliamentary left decreased dramatically since 2010, but that the usage of violence has also declined.

The protest event data, however, does support the claims of Jämte (2017) and Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015) that while class, anti-racism, and anti-fascism remain central protest questions, an increasing number of demonstrations have related to local issues and even local politicians in the years after 2010 (Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019, p. 19). A final interesting finding in the report is that Lund and Malmö are the two places with the most protest events per capita involving the extra-parliamentary left in the period from 1997-2016 (Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019, p. 15). Nonetheless, in general, the extra-parliamentary left appears to find itself in retreat in the current situation, with decreasing numbers and a decrease in actions.

If we turn away from the Swedish extra-parliamentary left and focus on the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö/Lund, there remain somewhere between 10 and 20 different groups associated with the extra-parliamentary left in this area. The Malmö/Lund area is usually regarded as the location with the strongest, most well-organized, and most populous extra-parliamentary left environment in Sweden, by individuals both within and outside the movement (Magnusson, 2014). Yet, it is again difficult to put an exact number on the number of individuals who belong to the extra-parliamentary left in this area. The best approximation I can provide comes from a combination of observation and discussions with participants. In 2019, the May 1st demonstration in Malmö had around 800-1000 participants, according to my own observations and

conversations with informants reflecting upon the demonstration⁵². The International Workers' Day demonstration is the most important event in the extra-parliamentary calendar, which suggests that the upper bound for extra-parliamentary left is slightly over 1000 people. Another important event in the calendar is the International Women's Day demonstration. In 2020, in Malmö, this event was attended by approximately 300-400 individuals. However, an important caveat here is that extra-parliamentary leftists in Lund had a separate demonstration on that day. Nonetheless, taking this number as a lower-bound, I suggest that the extra-parliamentary left consists of somewhere between 500 and 1000 individuals. However, not all these individuals are active in a political group. Again, based on my ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that about 70-120 individuals from the core of the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö and Lund, active within at least one organized political group.

As I noted above, these groups often continue to define themselves in line with the mini-platform AFA developed in the 1990s. For example, one evening in early 2020, Sofia and I sat drinking beer on the patio of a bar at Möllevångstorget. As we talked, she mentioned to me that she and a few of her friends were starting a new autonomous group. When she said this, I asked her if the group had anything written, like a program or a manifesto. Sofia said they hadn't come that far, but answered "No, but, you know, I think we have a description on Facebook or Instagram, it has all the usual stuff, you could probably guess it. I think it says we are socialists, feminists, anti-fascists, and anti-racists who work in an extra-parliamentary manner or something like that". When I arrived home and checked the group description on Instagram, it said "[Group name] is libertarian socialists. We are feminists, anti-racists, and anti-fascists and work in an extra-parliamentary manner."

Sofia argues that these labels are the 'usual' ones for groups in the extra-parliamentary left, and for the individuals who make up these groups. Indeed, as one reads through how the groups and individuals who are active in Malmö and Lund describe themselves, we repeatedly find these terms. For example, Organizing Autonomously (2015) describes themselves as a "feminist, antiracist, and revolutionary socialist organization" while AFA Malmö suggests that they have a "libertarian socialist worldview" and are part of the "fight against sexism,

⁵² This demonstration is usually joined by the extra-parliamentary groups from Lund, allowing for a picture of the combined Lund/Malmö population.

racism, capitalism, and homophobia” (Feminism Underifrån, 2020). Similarly, Mangla (2019) writes that they “attack capitalism, fascism, sexism, racism, transphobia, and homophobia in all of their forms without compromise” while Support Your Local Feminist (2019) defines themselves as a “socialist, feminist, and anti-fascist” group. When these groups describe themselves to a public audience, in spaces such as Facebook, Instagram, or flyers handed out at demonstrations, it is these words that dominate the group descriptions. These labels and terms “serve functions that are...social, providing the basis for communal interaction, and organizational, justifying institutional involvement and control” (Fine, 2006, p. 27). Taken together, these terms (socialist or anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist) denote the way the extra-parliamentary community defines itself.

Yet, an important characteristic of the extra-parliamentary left, similar to the German Autonom, is a “politics of the first person...[and] a belief that lasting structural and cultural change can only be accomplished if people work to put their political principles into practice in their daily lives” (Leach, 2009, p. 1053). This means that it is not enough to call yourself a socialist, a feminist, or an anti-fascist to become a member of the extra-parliamentary left. Rather you must *be* and *demonstrate* that you are a socialist or an anti-fascist, as these words are understood in the extra-parliamentary left. The following chapters, therefore, explore not only how one becomes an extra-parliamentary leftist but also the interactions and relations in which individuals attempt to demonstrate that they *are* extra-parliamentary leftists and maintain a deviant identity (Taylor & Whittier, 1992/1999). In doing so, I aim to examine not only how the political history of Sweden shapes the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, but also how the extra-parliamentary left, even as a radical movement, remains inherently connected to the surrounding society, even in the pursuit of community spaces.

6 Acting in Arenas: Varieties of Self-Stigmatization

Studying a politics of community requires that we pay attention to the political and societal context in which everyday interactions occur. For extra-parliamentary leftists, everyday life takes place firmly in the world of Swedish social democracy. For example, in late fall 2019, I attended a 30th birthday party for one of my informants. The venue for the party was the house where Per Albin Hansson⁵³ was born, which is today both a museum and available to rent for celebrations. Per Albin Hansson was the leader of SAP from 1925-1946 and twice served as prime minister of Sweden. He was instrumental in the development of both the term and the idea of the ‘People’s Home’ and was one of the main architects of the implementation of the social democratic welfare state in Sweden. The house itself is in the Kulladal area of Malmö, about a 20-minute walk from Möllevångstorget. It is a typical pre-war Scanian house, with a brick façade facing the street and the side walls painted in red and white. The house lies on Per Albin Hansson’s Road, and in the same neighborhood, you find a bar called ‘Per Albin’s Bar’ and a pre-school named after Per Albin Hansson. It is impossible to avoid either Per Albin Hansson or his legacy in this area of Malmö. Inside, the venue is large rectangular room, about 20 meters by 10 meters. The walls are painted white, with fluorescent ceiling lights illuminating the room. Within the room are several basic conference tables, familiar to anyone who has stepped into a classroom at a Swedish university, with white surfaces and room for about 8 people. The surrounding chairs are red and black with cloth surfaces. These are the same style of chairs that you find in waiting rooms throughout Sweden, whether you visit the social insurance office, the doctor’s office, or the public

⁵³ Per Albin Hansson (1885-1946) was born in Malmö and joined the social democratic movement at a young age. He belonged to the more reformist wing of SAP and is usually regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern Sweden.

employment service. From the location to the building to the chairs, at this party, we were undeniably within the home Per Albin Hansson helped build.

While this is an extreme example, everyday life in Sweden often has a similarly social democratic character. Although the social democratic hegemony has begun to fade (Therborn, 2018), in the period from around 1930-1980 SAP was able “both to launch and to institutionalize a social democratic society via reforms” (Esping-Andersen, 1990a, p. 48). Esping-Andersen (1990a, p. 42) further argues that social democratic institutionalization achieved such success due to specific aspects of Swedish culture with their roots in the 19th century, such as “loyalty, compliance and social solidarity” (see also Trägårdh, 1990). Even today, researchers argue that neoliberal reforms within Sweden have a specifically social-democratic character (Belfrage & Ryner, 2009; Ryner, 2004). Swedish society still bears strong traces of this social democratic hegemony, and the specific type of social democracy that SAP institutionalized, despite SAP’s fading political dominance. The actions of extra-parliamentary leftists in political arenas, then, must be considered in relation to the social democratic society.

As I have noted earlier, the extra-parliamentary left is a stigmatized group in Sweden (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, 2020b). I argued in Chapter 3 that stigma involves attempts at de-legitimization or de-authentication of an identity. I therefore begin this chapter in considering what provides the grounds for the stigmatization of the extra-parliamentary left. Here, I suggest that this stigmatization revolves around a conflict between ‘reformist’ and ‘radical’ habits of political action. Yet, the extra-parliamentary left must constantly achieve and demonstrate radicality. When extra-parliamentary leftists fail to achieve recognition as radical actors, not only are individuals not stigmatized, but the movement itself is no longer distinct and recognizable. Rather, both individuals and the movement can pass within Swedish society. To achieve both stigmatization and recognition, extra-parliamentary leftists self-stigmatize in their interactions with representatives of other societal groups. In this chapter, I focus on interactions and relations with three other Swedish political actors: SAP, the police and security services, and VP. I demonstrate that a different type of self-stigmatization characterizes each of these relations. I conclude this chapter in noting that extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to self-stigmatize as a means of forcing recognition, but that the other actors do not always respond as hoped. When these attempts fail, the extra-parliamentary left is neither distinct nor radical, but rather merely another political movement. Radicality, in this sense,

must constantly be achieved to enable the survival of extra-parliamentary politics. This chapter, thus, addresses the first research question of the dissertation, *how do extra-parliamentary leftists acquire stigma and interact in broader societal arenas?*

6.1 The Social Democratic Arena: Revolutionaries in a Reformist Society

In the previous chapter, I discussed the early social democratic movement, noting that conflicts over the differing strategies of revolution or reform had already started in 1891 (see 5.1). However, the issue of reformism or revolution was mostly settled within SAP by 1917, when the split with those who would become VP occurred, and SAP has consistently adopted a policy of reformism ever since. In essence, this is no longer an issue within the social world of SAP, as Strauss (1993) would say—it is not unsettled and there is no conflict surrounding it. Yet, while this may be the case in SAP, it remains an issue, rousing debate and creating conflict in the world of the extra-parliamentary left. Clashes surrounding not only the differences between revolution and reformism as political strategies but also on the proper relation between reformist and revolutionary groups abound. For example, in 2019, Brand⁵⁴ produced an issue with the theme of Revolution/Reformism. In a text introducing the issue, we find the thoughts of the editorial board of Brand:

This edition is about reformism and revolution. About two sides of the same coin, about a long-lasting destructive relationship, about two incompatible giants, about hate, betrayal, and cooperation.

(Brand, 2019, p. 1)

Immediately, the authors attempt to place the theme into a wider context, arguing that there exists an inescapable relation between reformist and revolutionary movements. The text goes even further, suggesting that these two different

⁵⁴ Brand itself is an interesting example of the relevance of these early conflicts in SAP. It started life as the magazine of the Young Socialists organization, and after the split with SAP, continued to be published by the Young Socialist Party. Today, it describes itself as “an anarchist magazine since 1898” (Brand, 2021).

tendencies are ‘two sides of the same coin’, and that the movements can even cooperate at times. However, the authors also point out that they view this relationship as unreliable, and at other times, rather than cooperation, hate and betrayal characterize relations between reformist and revolutionary leftist movements. The text continues in describing reformism with vivid metaphors:

Reformism is bureaucracy, soullessness, an agenda for the sake of an agenda, to say that “it’s a good thought in theory but we have a budget to take into account.”

Reformism is the forbidden thought. The attraction of being rational. To give up on feelings and see reality. To put on a tie and become an adult sometime.

Reformism is the world’s worst boyfriend. He claims that we have the same goals, that we must stick together, that we cannot live without each other. But reformism doesn’t hesitate to flirt with right wing forces. Reformism comes home in the middle of the night and explains itself away. Reformism is ashamed of us in public but promises us eternal love in private. Maybe we have to break up.

(Brand, 2019, p. 1)

Here, reformism encompasses far more than a simple political strategy. The authors instead equate it with a way of life. Reformist individuals are those who act without passion, who do not dream of another world, and who simply accept the ‘reality’ of the world. Similarly, reformism involves a willingness to ally with ‘right-wing forces’ and an unwillingness to advocate for the same beliefs in public and private. The authors suggest, in this sense, that reformism involves a lack of commitment. Alternatively, this lack of commitment can instead be read as a suggestion that reformism is a commitment to the current norms of a society, to ‘having an agenda for the sake of an agenda’, rather than a commitment to a change. Within Sweden, reformism, SAP, and the broader social democratic project are inherently linked. Descriptions of reformism, for individuals in the extra-parliamentary left, are often therefore descriptions of social democracy. Acting as a reformist involves passing (Goffman, 1963/1990) in Swedish society. While extra-parliamentary leftists recognize that reformist and revolutionary movements are linked, reformism does not carry any stigma with it, it is instead the conventional or legitimate manner of acting in Swedish social arenas.

Members of the extra-parliamentary left are aware of the conventional habits in Swedish society. Furthermore, almost all the individuals I spoke with during

my fieldwork were extremely capable of acting in line with and succeeding according to these conventional social democratic habits. Many of the individuals I interacted with are highly educated, with Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and a substantial number work in professional or quasi-professional fields (doctors, psychologists, teachers, public servants, etc.). This suggests that when extra-parliamentary leftists become stigmatized, it is when they identify and act as extra-parliamentary leftists, rather than any broader disqualifying characteristic. Stigma, for this group, involves achieved rule-breaking, or "the commission of a norm-violating act by the rule-breaker" (Mankoff, 1971, p. 208). If individuals do not perform acts that reveal their association with the extra-parliamentary left or stop performing these acts, they can, in essence, repudiate the stigma (Rogers & Buffalo, 1974). The stigma associated with the extra-parliamentary left, in this sense, carries few stigma symbols with it (Goffman, 1963/1990). Passing in Swedish society becomes neither impossible nor forever ruled out.

When members of the extra-parliamentary left act in non-directly political social arenas, such as at work or at university, they are aware of this. They seldom talk openly about their involvement with the movement, carefully choosing whom they are willing to share the 'discrediting' information about their involvement in the extra-parliamentary left with. As Erik, who works as a medical professional, says:

...I would say that there are some leftist sympathizers at my job, so I talk politics with a few of them, but not all. And never openly before the boss or everyone in the team.

Erik does not rule out talking about his political involvement and activities at work, but he notes that he would never do so openly. He worries about the potential consequences of others learning this information, and therefore carefully manages how he shares details about his political opinions. Alma, who works in the public sector, notes similarly that it is only recently that she has begun to talk about her political activities at work:

I think it's difficult [to talk about politics at work], it's taken me a long time to get to that point. I avoided it entirely in the beginning, for many years, but then I changed to the unit I'm in now and it feels more relaxed... But it's hard I'm so used to not doing it, it's hard sometimes. But I would never say it to my boss. My colleagues, maybe.

Again, Alma states that she has hidden her political involvement for many years. Like Erik, she also emphasizes that she would never tell her boss. Instead, it is her colleagues who she considers beginning to speak with. Individuals are careful about sharing their association or involvement with the extra-parliamentary left, fearful of potential consequences or repression. Ferree (2005) argues that we can divide repression against social movements into two forms, hard and soft repression (see even Linden & Klandermans, 2006). Hard repression “involves the mobilization of force to control or crush oppositional action through the use or threat of violence” while soft repression “involves the mobilization of nonviolent means to silence or eradicate oppositional ideas” (Ferree, 2005, p. 141). Repression against the extra-parliamentary left tends to take the form of soft repression. Although this is not true in all cases, as I explore below in terms of the relation between the extra-parliamentary left and the police and security services, individuals fear mainly the social consequences they would suffer if their involvement in the extra-parliamentary left was revealed, rather than the carceral (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a). They believe that this reveal would be a discrediting event, to their colleagues or superiors at work, or more broadly, to ‘normals’ in Goffman’s language (Goffman, 1963/1990).

Yet, as the professional and educational accomplishments of many members of the extra-parliamentary left demonstrate, deviance does not arise out ignorance. This is not a group of marginalized individuals, as we tend to discuss in reference to stigma such as the mentally ill (Thoits, 2011) or homeless youth (Roschelle & Kaufman, 2004). The potential consequences of involvement in or identification with the extra-parliamentary left make this type of political participation a form of high-risk activism (Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). As Jämte and Ellefsen (2020a, p. 398) argue, it is “at the individual level, where the risks of being associated with the extremist label seem greatest.” In response to potential stigmatization, Lipp (1977, p. 66) argues that actors are “likely to be in search of means of escape and evasion” from that stigmatization. One means of escape identified in the text from Brand above is to ‘give up’ or to ‘see reality’ and adopt the politics and habits of reformism and social democracy. Individuals can return to the conventional world, engage in politics in the ‘normal’ way, and no longer need to fear the potential occurrence of a discrediting event. While this certainly happens, it does not help us to explain the continuing participation of many others in the extra-parliamentary left, despite an awareness of the risks and potential consequences.

Lipp (1977, p. 66) argues, conversely, that instead of choosing to repudiate or flee from a stigma, individuals and groups can instead “neutralize, re-interpret and redetermine the relevant socially-strategic guilt ascriptions-the evaluations- that virtually destroy their identities, and which seem to them illegitimate.” In this process, individuals “react by capitalizing on their own supposed defects” and “re-evaluate their own supposed defects and present them as positive elements” (Lipp, 1977, p. 66). Lipp calls this process, where individuals reverse stigmatization, rejecting the negative characteristics associated with stigmata and instead reinterpreting them as positive qualities, *self-stigmatization*⁵⁵. Roschelle and Kaufman (2004, p. 31) discuss a similar process as strategies of exclusion, where “kids who are homeless attempted to redress their spoiled identity by declaring themselves tougher, more mature, and better than others.” Wimmer (2008a; 2008b, p. 988) alternately calls this process inversion, where “the category of the excluded and despised comes to designate a chosen people who are morally, physically, and culturally superior to the dominant group.” Within the extra-parliamentary left, a process of self-stigmatization takes place. In their self-stigmatization, extra-parliamentary leftists act in a manner which attempts to demonstrate that it is the reformists, or the groups or individuals associated with social democracy, who do not understand reality. Conversely, it is the revolutionaries who are the true representatives of the Swedish working class, and the Swedish left, and who properly promote the cause of socialism. It is the reformists, then, who deserve to be stigmatized, and not the revolutionaries, in the eyes of members of the extra-parliamentary left.

In another article from the edition of Brand introduced above, we can see this process at work. The article consists of an interview with Jenny Jansson, a Swedish researcher who focuses on the trade union movement in Sweden, and specifically, the establishment of the culture and identity of LO (see e.g. Jansson, 2012, 2013). The article introduces the interview through a framing which asks how the social democrats and LO succeeded in de-radicalizing the Swedish labor movement, and instead “creating a reformist worker’s movement” (Söderquist, 2019, p. 4). It is this framing I want to focus on. In this portrayal, the Swedish left and the Swedish

⁵⁵ It is important to emphasize that Lipp’s concept of self-stigma is **not** the same as the concept of self-stigma within psychological research. For example, Corrigan, Watson, and Barr (2006) define self-stigma as when individuals internalize the prejudices and negative conceptions relating to a stigma. This is not what is meant here. While Lipp’s concept has some similarities, it does not have these negative connotations.

labor movement were naturally radical until SAP and LO de-radicalized them. The article further argues that as part of this de-radicalization process, LO and SAP consciously worked to create divisions within the working class. In her academic work, Jansson (2012) suggests that the LO-leadership at the time consciously chose to create an LO identity, with associated sets of behavior, in opposition to an identity based on class. To do so, LO attempted to “emphasize that there are different types of workers” (Söderquist, 2019, p. 6). Jansson (2013, p. 310) argues that one division LO drew was between LO and SAC, emphasizing that SAC was an “irrational body” and that the “typical syndicalist [was a] radical young trade unionist.” In opposition to the immaturity of syndicalists, LO-members were portrayed as “well-behaved, responsible, and hard-working people who followed the rules and respected other organizations” (Jansson, 2013, p. 310). Jansson (2013, p. 308) also argues that LO’s idea of responsibility included a specific understanding of democratic centralism, where members should be loyal to the organization” and follow the decisions of the organization “in accordance with the rule of law.”

Nonetheless, Jansson is describing a process that happened almost 100 years ago (Jansson’s work focuses largely on the 1920s and 1930s). However, if Esping-Andersen (1990a) and others are correct, it is precisely these habits that became institutionalized in Swedish society. Swedish political organizations should be well-behaved, avoid conflict, and work well with other organizations while members of these organizations should be loyal to the organization and act in adherence with the organization’s decision. It is almost precisely these qualities which individuals in the extra-parliamentary left argue are worthy of stigma. Individuals and groups who are loyal to an organization rather than a class or a cause, who are ‘well-behaved’, and who are ‘responsible’ are those who “have said no to the welfare state and the possibilities for people to live as tolerable lives as possible” (Brand, 2019, p. 1). It is not the revolutionaries or the immature members of SAC who are the problem, it is instead the reformists, in the view of extra-parliamentary leftists.

One way of describing individuals, groups, or behaviors that appear to adhere to what extra-parliamentary leftists regard as reformist habits is *soässig*. In my time in the field, this word was often used. Initially, this confused me as it was not a word I had heard used or even seen very often. *Soässig* is an extremely versatile word. Throughout my fieldwork, I have heard it applied to a wide range of phenomena, from individuals who make comments rather than ask questions after

lectures to groups such as SAP, LO, The Tenant's Association, Everything for Everyone, and even at times, to the entire extra-parliamentary movement in Sweden. It is never a compliment for groups, individuals, or acts to be described as *sossigt*. However, it does not have to be negative, it can instead be used neutrally, as a descriptive statement or statement of fact. Måns, for example, describes the values and views of his parents in an interview like this:

Måns: ...both of my parents have very much these *sossiga* values. I mean, they like the *Folkhem*, they stand basically for its values, it should be solidaric, you should be against racism, things like that.

Måns argues that his parents' values are standard, and the common values of Swedish social democratic society. These are the conventional ways of thinking, individuals should be, for example, solidaric and against racism. Måns is not against these values (if anything, he supports them) but although he identifies as anti-racist and solidaric, he would not describe himself the same way. *Sossigt*, for him, implies something else as well. Elin, who was organized in The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League (SSU)⁵⁶ when she was younger and did not join the extra-parliamentary left until after many of her friends, helps to highlight the differences between what it means to be *sossigt* and what it means to be extra-parliamentary:

Elin: ...I mean I was *sossigt* much longer than they were, I mean we fought a lot.

Colm: Do you remember any of the topics-

Elin: ah, we fought about the Youth House⁵⁷. I thought it was unnecessary to riot, we argued about that.

Elin argues that to be *sossigt* and to be extra-parliamentary is impossible. While her friends had stopped being *sossigt*, she remained that way much longer than they did, causing conflict. In the example she cites, she relates to one of the overarching conflicts between the *sossiga* reformists and the revolutionaries of the extra-parliamentary left regarding the use of violence and the disruption of order.

⁵⁶ The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League, or SSU, is the youth organization of SAP. For more on SSU, see Chapter 7.

⁵⁷ See footnote 6.

As Jansson (2013) shows, one of the key aspects of the creation of an LO identity was a commitment to not disrupting social order, or the normal functioning of society. Instead, LO-members could be relied upon to help keep society running in contrast to SAC members. Similarly, here, members of the extra-parliamentary left almost always support disruptions to social order, and the use of violence to further political goals is legitimate, if not always necessary or worthwhile (for more on understandings of violence, see 8.1). Elin portrays herself as *sossigt* because she did not think it was legitimate to riot. It is *sossigt* because she thought it was important to follow the rules and to be well-behaved. Behaviors along these lines are the correct way to pursue political change, in the reformist understanding.

Yet, while Elin's use of *sossigt* is a negative use, it is important to emphasize that extra-parliamentary leftists have a complicated and complex relationship to social democracy and the traditional Swedish reformist labor movement. As Rasmus, a member of SAC, notes, it is important that individuals do not forget the positive aspects of SAP and LO, when considering these organizations or movements.

Colm: How do you think about the Swedish model?

Rasmus: ...we have to recognize the things we have won in Sweden. For example, [group name] gets money from ABF so that we can have extra-parliamentary spaces. And the little welfare that we have. My life is better thanks to LO and SAP...

Rasmus emphasizes that despite its flaws, he thinks social democracy has made his life better. While the negative aspects of social democracy are often highlighted when individuals write political texts or act politically, in other situations there exists a far more ambivalent or even positive relation to social democracy. This was particularly apparent to me in informal conversations during my field work, when individuals started discussions about or asked me about American politics. As one individual noted after discussing the student loan system in the US, *'like yea, Sweden sucks, but your country [the US] is completely fucked'* (Field Notes). Extra-parliamentary leftists suggest while Sweden has its issues, it does still have many features that improve their lives, in comparison with other countries. This is even true on a group level. Even today, many groups in the extra-parliamentary left receive resources from ABF, which as Rasmus notes, helps extra-parliamentary groups to pay rent or hold events. ABF, and other social democratic organizations,

like The Tenant's Association often hold a similarly ambivalent place in an extra-parliamentary analysis. Viktor, in a discussion on the relationship between leftist movements and the working class, highlights this point:

Colm: so, you often make a difference between the left and the working class, it comes back a lot, can you expand on that a bit? What do you mean?

Viktor: ...but when people act politically, they do it in their leftist groups with their leftist friends, you don't do it with your co-workers or in an apartment group or whatever... but the Tenant's Association is a class organization in a way that Everything for Everyone isn't. That's what I would say. As *sossigt* and boring as it sounds.

Viktor uses *sossigt* in a neutral or ambivalent sense here, but it is also apparent that he does so while knowing that his use could be interpreted negatively. He argues that the extra-parliamentary left, as it is constructed today, is not a class organization or movement because it is not organized (solely) based on social position or common problems. He acknowledges that the extra-parliamentary left may not be the representatives of the Swedish working class, and that other organizations, such as the unions or The Tenant's Association, are the places where individuals are more likely to organize on a class basis. Viktor seems positive to these organizations, while he is more negative to the extra-parliamentary mode of political organizing, which he argues is based more on a leftist identity than class.

However, his analysis is *sossigt* for another reason. It is boring, in his words. In his quote, a notion of what the text above from Brand calls 'to see reality' is present. Rather than analyzing politics and political action from the point of view of an extra-parliamentary leftist, Viktor adheres to the conventional logic of the surrounding society. A crucial component of the extra-parliamentary left understanding of the conventional, *sossigt* surrounding society revolves around how 'boring' or 'adult' it is. We see this further above, where the Brand text argued that one of the attractions of reformism was 'to become an adult sometime.' I noted previously that the word *sossigt* could also be applied to organizations or movements. One debate that occurred during my time in the field began in response to a government report around the *sossiefiering*⁵⁸ of the extra-

⁵⁸ Roughly translated, this means something like 'becoming more social democratic.'

parliamentary left. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) released the report in 2019 and it was authored by two of the leading researchers in Sweden on radical leftist movements, Magnus Wennerhag and Jan Jämte. The report contains a table detailing a protest event database which explores the actions of the extra-parliamentary left between 1997 and 2016 and argues that not only has the extra-parliamentary left engaged in fewer protest actions since 2010 but also that there is “a decreased use of political violence” (Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019, p. 19). The report continues in suggesting that “a larger proportion of the protests are conventional” and that “on a general level, there has been a shift from a countercultural activist network to a more traditional organized movement which aims to mobilize in the local society and at workplaces” (Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019, p. 19). After the publication of the report, a minor debate broke out in Sweden’s national press discussing the changes within the extra-parliamentary left. For example, Petter Larsson (2019) wrote in *Aftonbladet*, one of Sweden’s leading newspapers, that “the autonomous environment, as its usually called, is on its way to being deradicalized.”

While a broader societal debate took place, the report was also hotly contested in the extra-parliamentary community. An interesting aspect of this debate was that, for the most part, the numbers in the report were not contested. Most individuals accepted that the conclusions of the report, suggesting that less violence and more conventional organizing were occurring, were correct. The debate thus revolved around the question of whose fault it was, and whether this was a negative development or a natural one. A text published on *gatorna.info* (see Kaati, 2018, pp. 27-29), a website that describes itself as a ‘revolutionary info center’, addressed these developments. The text was titled “What is sossigt, actually?” and begins like this:

A sossifying or maturation is being talked in the political development of the autonomous environment in Sweden. Sossifying and maturation can in this context be seen as synonymous, they suggest a naïve picture of how an environment is influenced by, amongst other things, repression from state power.

(Barbamamma, 2019)

Here, we see that similar to the Brand authors the author of this text equates *sossifying* and maturation. The author argues that for individuals outside the extra-parliamentary left, to become sossigt is also to become an adult. Just as

individuals can grow up and change from radical syndicalists to well-behaved LO members, so too can movements and communities. Later in the text, the author continues:

But the central is not our decision to be more tactical, the central is the state power that punches us from the beginning. Sossigt, that is to stand there thankful for the state powers' repression which forced the environment to change. Sossigt is to sit on two chairs, to on the one side claim that one belongs to the environment while one presents oneself for the bourgeoisie's use in the academy and expose our weaknesses.

The autonomous environment is far from sossigt (regardless of whether we mean anarchists or autonomous Marxists), but we have many social democrats amongst us...Equality without disruption to the order is their implicit motto...It is not us who force others to act upon our convictions. It is social democrats who are best at that type of boring politics.

(Barbamamma, 2019)

It is in the last paragraph that we return to the notion of boring politics that Viktor discussed. Boring politics is politics where individuals are unwilling to disrupt the order, and politics where individuals do not act on their own convictions, but instead 'force others to act.' The author ascribes the motto 'equality without disruption to the order' to individuals who are *sossigt*. It is this motto that makes it possible to unite these disparate uses and understandings of sossigt we see in use. Both reformists and revolutionaries desire equality. It is this that at times makes the relationship between extra-parliamentary leftists and the institutional political organizations ambivalent, as reformism has made steps in Sweden towards greater equality. However, it is the unwillingness to disrupt or challenge the societal order that reveals the true character of SAP and those who are sossigt for extra-parliamentary leftists. In this understanding, to be sossigt, then, is to be well-behaved and to not cause trouble. It is to refuse to seek conflict, and instead to seek cooperation, even with actors who do not share leftist opinions. It is to be an 'adult', or to be a conventional member of society, who helps to ensure that things run smoothly. To be sossigt means to fit in in the surrounding society and to refuse to rock the boat.

When individuals do not act this way, but rather seek to disrupt order and challenge institutionalized understandings, they can be stigmatized. In this sense,

stigmatization serves as a recognition of the non-sossig nature of the extra-parliamentary left. At the individual level, individuals often have little trouble acting according to the sossig habits of the conventional society and can pass with little trouble. Even at the movement level, the recent debate about sossifying suggests that the movement could also pass as just another Swedish political actor. As Jämte et al. (2020) argue, the extra-parliamentary left has undeniably turned towards more pragmatic political actions. Yet, in the view of extra-parliamentary leftists, the extra-parliamentary left has not become sossigt because it remains willing to disrupt order. Furthermore, rather than accepting the stigma or the label of an immature, badly behaved group, extra-parliamentary leftists “re-evaluate [themselves] positively in order to build an alternative” (Gil Arbiol, 2004, p. 161). However, this alternative requires recognition from dominant political actors in order to succeed—if it is not recognized, the extra-parliamentary left is neither radical nor distinctive, it is instead merely another political group. Extra-parliamentary leftists pursue this recognition primarily through self-stigmatization, as we can see, for example, in a recent campaign surrounding the right to strike for Swedish workers.

6.2 Strike Back: Provocative Self-Stigmatization

In the context of the above understandings, it is important to emphasize that stigmatization or labelling processes occur in everyday interaction. Individuals feel the need to hide their involvement in the extra-parliamentary left, and “the risk of label association” is felt “to affect their personal life and social activities” (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, p. 395). However, it is equally important to highlight that individuals have multiple identities. Not all of the identities an individual possesses are stigmatized, it is specifically the identity of an extra-parliamentary leftist that carries stigma with it. When individuals are recognized as workers, friends, employees, or other identities, they are not at risk of stigmatization. Yet, when they engage in political action as extra-parliamentary leftists, through organizing, for example, demonstrations, they must enter into the Swedish political arena which remains dominated by SAP, LO, and social democracy. In these arenas, and representing this identity, individuals are stigmatized and the extra-parliamentary left is not regarded as a legitimate actor. In these cases, I argue

that the extra-parliamentary left often engages in form of action that I understand as *provocative self-stigmatization*.

In his work on self-stigmatization, Lipp “sub-divides stigmatization into the following phenotypes: exhibitionism, provocation, ascetism, and ecstasy” (Steyrer, 1998, p. 813). Provocative self-stigmatization denotes actions which challenge “the societal order to provoke a reaction from society’s side...[individuals] will force society to show its true face through breaking its repressive order” (Heidegren & Wästerfors, 2019, p. 207). In spring 2019, a campaign begun in the extra-parliamentary left called ‘Don’t Touch the Right to Strike’⁵⁹. This campaign has changed names at least two times and has also been called ‘Defend the Strike Right’ and ‘Strike Back.’ Emma describes the initial stages and point of the campaign like this:

Emma: I joined there [the campaign] through [Group Name], which I was in before. We got an email from Malmö LS about the cutbacks that would happen to the strike right, and they wanted to start something. So I thought it was important and got excited and went to a meeting as a representative for my group. But then it never became a huge cooperation, but instead we made a working group. So it went with this campaign, and then when I left [Group Name] I stayed in the working group which became more us as private people.

Colm: How would you describe the campaign? Like, what is it you guys do?

Emma: We work with, I would say that we mostly do information distribution and propaganda, I guess is how you could describe it. We think that this is a proposed law that has gotten fairly little attention, people don’t have much idea about it, but also its really hard to understand. Both about what it is about and why, like what would be the consequences, I mean I had almost no idea, I wasn’t at all aware when we started, it’s really hard if you’re not really good at labor law, and also there are a lot of people who don’t understand why it’s important to be able to strike. It’s really far away from most people’s everyday life...the point of the campaign is partly to draw attention to that this happening, and explain [it], we work a lot with pedagogical informational pictures...

In this retelling, there are several important points to highlight. First, Emma makes a clear distinction between individuals engaging in politics as

⁵⁹ *Rör inte strejkrätten*, in Swedish.

representatives for their groups, and as private people. I will return to this point further down, but it is vital to keep this distinction in mind. Second, Emma characterizes the general worker, or Swede, as largely unaware of both how labor law works, but also unaware of why it is important that workers have the right to strike. The first point is unsurprising and likely accurate. I would suggest that the vast majority of us, who are not lawyers, have very little idea about the finer nuances of any area of the law, for the simple reason that we generally have no need of this knowledge. In Schutzian terms, it is simply not relevant in our day-to-day lives. However, it is through the second point that Emma situates us in both the historical and present-day context of Sweden. As I noted in the previous chapter, strikes largely disappeared from the tactics of Swedish unions in the 1920s and 1930s. While there was a brief upturn in strikes during the 1970s, this general pattern has remained the same into today, and in 2020, there were no strikes in Sweden (Lindström, 2021; Medlingsinstitutet, 2021). Sweden is, in fact, amongst the countries with the fewest number of strikes in the world (Lindström, 2019).

In discussing this campaign, and in understanding the importance the proposed changes to the right to strike took on in the extra-parliamentary left, merely looking into ideology does not fully explain this phenomenon. As one individual involved with SAC said, *'you always have a moral right to strike. Especially within a capitalist system.'* Changes to the legal right to strike, in this sense, are not important. Within a syndicalist or extra-parliamentary ideology, workers always have the right to strike. Ideologically, granting the state the power to decide when workers can or cannot strike adheres more closely to the reformist leftist ideology. However, if we instead consider this campaign as provocative self-stigmatization aimed at an audience of workers, SAP, and LO, I suggest that we can come closer to understanding both the importance of the campaign and the extra-parliamentary left, itself.

I argue here that this campaign largely revolved around two separate issues. We can trace the first back to what I discussed above, in the conflicting ideas about how unions should relate to employers. Namely, should this relation be characterized by cooperation, as in the reformist understanding, or conflict, as in the revolutionary understanding. This is most evident in the different interpretations of striking. In a flyer handed out at a demonstration in Malmö in 2019, the campaign wrote *"The union's most important tool is the possibility to strike, it is the only thing that forces the employers to negotiate and make collective*

agreements.” As we can see from the statistics on strikes, this is not the understanding promoted in the largest labor unions in Sweden. While strikes are rare in Sweden, when they do occur, they are almost always led by SAC. Magnus, a labor organizer in SAC, discusses how he views the use of strikes:

Colm: When do you think striking is a good strategy?

Magnus: Hmmm, partly when people are willing to take part, and partly when it’s needed but it’s so context dependent. Strikes are good, or other industrial actions, partly because they attack the buyer of labor but also because it helps organizing. You create a stronger organization through people participating.

Magnus suggests that strikes are positive not only because he argues that they help to build a stronger organization, but also because through striking, workers can attack employers in his understanding. It is clear that rather than a cooperative relationship with employers, Magnus views the relation between the working class and employers through a conflictual lens. In contrast to this understanding, that characterizes SAC and the extra-parliamentary left, the campaign portrayed the major union coalitions in Sweden as standing on the side of employers or SAP, rather than workers. This, then, is why LO and the other major union coalitions do not strike. It is not because they do not see it as a useful strategy, but instead because they do not truly support workers. Throughout the campaign, this portrayal of LO was promoted in the language used in flyers and other texts, and even in the speeches and actions that occurred at demonstrations. For example, in August 2018, the campaign organized a national demonstration against the proposed changes in Stockholm, inviting groups from all over Sweden and even other parts of Scandinavia. In the ‘International Call’ for the demonstration, the campaign framed the problem in the following manner:

In order to understand why this [the changes to the law] is a massive problem we have to take a step back and look at the broader context of the Swedish labor market which has a relative high level of unionization in most sectors, dominated by unions controlled by the Swedish Trade Union Confederacy, LO which organizes around a million blue collar workers in Sweden. This union is heavily centralized and utterly controlled by the Social Democrats. Through this control Sweden has very few strikes, particularly during Social Democratic governments, and now we are at a record low number of strikes– which makes a limitation to striking even more absurd.

(Strike Back- försvara strejkrätten, 2018)

Here, the campaign strongly promotes a picture of LO and SAP as the same. Rather than standing on the side of workers, LO only works to support SAP and to ensure that SAP encounters few problems related to industrial actions when in government. It is LO, in this understanding, who actively makes the situation of workers in Sweden worse. The location of the demonstration in Stockholm and the messages of the demonstration further attempted to emphasize this point. The initial gathering point was outside of the LO's headquarters in Stockholm, and many of the speeches and signs were directed at LO and SAP's perceived betrayal of the working class, rather than at employers or capital owners. One speaker remarked, "*today we are many who are gathered outside the LO-Headquarters to show what we think about the agreement with the employers. LO does not have the support of its members. Defend the Strike Right!*" (Field notes). While the demonstration started with speeches, it then split up into different groups. I followed four of my informants into what was called 'the yellow finger', where the color yellow was suggested to symbolize 'betrayal and treason' (Strike Back-försvära strejkrätten, 2018). This part of the protest was described as a tour of Stockholm with the "theme of class treason throughout history. After the demonstration, we will walk to historically important places which symbolize the social democrats and LOs betrayal of the working class over time" (Strike Back-försvära strejkrätten, 2018). This tour ended at the site of SAP's headquarters, on Sveavägen in Stockholm, where the demonstration intended to block the street.



Description: Two banners from the August 2018 demonstration in Stockholm. The banner on the top says “The LO-leadership does not have its members behind them. Throw the proposed changes to the strike right in the trash!” while the banner on the bottom says “If you touch it, you die! Defend the strike right!” with the logos of SAP and LO on the banner.

The yellow finger consisted of about 100 people. When we arrived at the headquarters of SAP, we were quickly surrounded by 50-75 police officers, who lined the street on both sides. The demonstration succeeded in blocking one side of the street, and quickly settled into a peaceful, if somewhat tense, standoff with the police. At one point, two individuals standing near us attempted to recruit us to join them in trying to block the whole street. They had brought a length of yellow pipe with them, and linked their arms together through the pipe. One of the individuals I was following, Jens, remarked that they were unlikely to succeed, but that they might as well try. As they moved over the yellow line, onto the other side of the street, they were quickly picked up by the police and deposited back next to us, on our side of the yellow line. Rather than rousing any feeling within the demonstration, most individuals appeared to look on with merely interested curiosity. When I asked Jens about the interaction with the police, or whether we should be worried about the police, he answered that there was nothing to worry about, and that it would probably remain like this (calm, and in many ways, uneventful) until everyone got bored. He continued in stating that the police wouldn't want to cause a scene, as there were already rumors that a protester had been ridden down by a police horse in another of the demonstrations 'fingers'⁶⁰. The next hour or two consisted of sitting in a small circle on the street, eating snacks, smoking cigarettes, and discussing plans for the evening. There were also continuous updates about the other 'fingers' of the demonstration, where one finger had ended up in clashes with police, while in another part of the city, there were clashes between neo-Nazis, police, and protestors.

Here, in essence, I wish to suggest that everything about this demonstration, and the campaign itself, is constructed as anti-sossig. The demonstration specifically seeks to disrupt social order, both through actions such as blocking a street, but also in the other fingers, through attempting to disrupt the public transportation network in Stockholm or through engaging in violent conflict with the police and neo-Nazis. The police act as "custodians of the 'official' definitions of reality", standing threateningly and ready to intervene, symbolically protecting the headquarters of SAP (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 124). The demonstration, and the campaign, have clear enemies and targets in the form of SAP and LO. We move within the city in a path from the headquarters of LO to

⁶⁰ This did, in fact, occur. For more, see <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/lisa-blev-nedtrampad-av-polishast-fruktansvart/>.

the headquarters of SAP, with a tour guide reminding us along the way of various instances where these two organizations ‘have betrayed the working class.’ This is a reinterpretation of history, where individuals “accept the deviant label and even the behavioral responsibility for it” (Rogers & Buffalo, 1974, p. 112). The extra-parliamentary left accepts that they do not belong to the conventional, *soSSiga* society, but rather than viewing this as a negative, individuals flip the script, casting SAP and LO as the villains. It is not the immature, striking workers who hold the working class back, but the mature, cooperative, well-behaved organizations. In accepting the label of deviance, however, the campaign seeks a response not only from SAP and LO, but from members of the union and the party. Rather than members listening to the organization’s leadership, as should be the case in LO and SAP (Jansson, 2012), the leadership should listen to the members. The speeches, signs, and messages of the campaign argue that individuals are the primary political actors, rather than organizations. With these arguments, claims, and demonstration, the extra-parliamentary left seeks a reaction from SAP and LO, where they will “reveal their true face”, as standing on the side of employers and capital, rather than the workers (Heidegren & Wästerfors, 2019, p. 207).

When individuals in the extra-parliamentary left step into the broader Swedish political arena, they usually do so in a manner characterized by provocative self-stigmatization. Individuals accept the label of deviance and attempt to use stigmatized actions to provoke a reaction from the conventional society. However, the reactions of actors like SAP, LO, and the police are vitally important in this process. When they react, two processes occur. First, it helps the extra-parliamentary left to become distinctive, confirming that extra-parliamentary habits are different from *soSSiga* habits. The way of life of the extra-parliamentary left is displayed, informing the surrounding society of possible alternatives. Second, it also allows the extra-parliamentary left to achieve stigma. As I have attempted to emphasize, stigmatization is an interactional process. If no one reacts to or labels a behavior or group as deviant, it is extremely difficult to claim that the group’s habits are either distinctive or stigmatized. In provocative self-stigmatization, the extra-parliamentary left acts in such a manner to force dominant groups to apply stigmatized labels. While this is most obvious in the relation and interactions with SAP and LO, it is also apparent in other types of action such as the ‘Overclass Safari’ Everything for Everyone organized in the late 2000s. Discussing this action, and others like it, Isak notes:

Colm: What do you think is the best way to influence society?

Isak: ...It requires so little in Sweden to break the consensus culture, like the overclass safari where we traveled around with a bus and said 'the overclass lives here and they are criminals' basically, because they have been convicted of this and that, and it caused a fucking storm. In any other country, no one would have cared, but because we went against the consensus culture here, it's easy to be heard as soon as you go over the line. Or no one else in the world still talks about Gothenburg 2001, it was just a riot on the street, but in Sweden, it became this enormous thing. It says something about the political scale.

Isak argues here that Sweden has a 'consensus culture.' As I have explored above, for members of the extra-parliamentary left, this consensus culture is the *soosigt* surrounding society. It is an unwillingness to engage in conflict and disruption. Extra-parliamentary leftists are aware of these social norms and can act in line with them. However, it is specifically these rules they refuse to recognize and whose legitimacy they disavow when engaging in provocative self-stigmatization. Furthermore, as Isak notes, they chose to go over the line as a means of 'being heard.' In going over the line, the extra-parliamentary left not only achieves stigma, but forces the conventional society to recognize and react to them. In this sense, actions in the Swedish political arena may bear more resemblance to civil disobedience, than to revolutionary action (Hayes, 2007). Following Wennerhag (2017a), I argue that it is actually this quality that at times makes the extra-parliamentary left in Sweden a radical movement. He defines radicals as actors "usually prepared to go one step further than mainstream political actors" (Wennerhag, 2017a, p. 5). However, it is important to emphasize here that the extra-parliamentary left, and extra-parliamentary leftists, do not always 'go over the line.' This is not always a radical movement, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters. Radicalness, instead, is achieved through provocative self-stigmatization. In these actions, extra-parliamentary leftists demonstrate their willingness to go further than other political actors, in an attempt not only to show what they see as the true face of social democracy, but also in attempt to force the surrounding society to recognize the group as distinctive and different. At times, this provocative self-stigmatization resembles the campaigns of contentious politics, as in the Don't Touch the Right to Strike campaign. However, rather than a focus on achieving instrumental claims, I argue here the

purpose of these types of actions is to achieve recognition and confirm in interaction that the extra-parliamentary left is a different type of political actor.

6.3 The Security Arena: Ecstatic Self-Stigmatization



Description: A picture posted on gatorna.info of the scene described below.

I hear a sudden scraping noise. It has a vague resemblance to nails on a chalkboard. Look behind us and see grates being put out on the street. At least 40 police start to walk down the street towards us. I feel a slight wave of panic. Start to glance around for possible escape routes. Look at the others. Adam seems unconcerned, but he immediately starts smoking a cigarette. The police slowly line the road on both sides of us.

(Field Notes, Strike Back)

When the extra-parliamentary left engages in provocative self-stigmatization, another actor often enters the picture. At any demonstration the extra-

parliamentary left organizes, the police are an undeniable, visible presence. I have even been to several demonstrations, mostly in Lund, where there were at least as many police as demonstrators, and possibly more. In yellow vests, and often wearing helmets, the police stick out from the other individuals present, who usually are dressed in all black. While the relation between the extra-parliamentary left and state representatives is usually characterized by soft repression (Ferree, 2005; Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a), it is usually at demonstrations that acts occur where soft repression turns into hard repression, or where “the use or threat of violence” exists against members of the extra-parliamentary left (Ferree, 2005, p. 141). Although the different types of repression can lead to the dispersal of a demonstration or the disintegration of a group, they can also have the opposite effect. Within the social movement literature, this is usually referred to as backfire effects, or situations where “counterterrorist policies lead to increased risks of terrorist violence, increased opposition and adverse attitudes among target groups” (Lindekilde, 2016, p. 52). At protests or demonstrations, for example, attempts by the police to control the crowd can instead lead to more violence, and in the long-run, a stronger movement (Hess & Martin, 2006; Karpantschof, 2015). The most relevant type of backfire effects in this dissertation regard what Lindekilde (2016) calls a *cognitive backfire mechanism*, and specifically, his mechanism of *reactive pride*. He defines reactive pride as when “target groups faced with the subtle forms of prevention of wrong and stimulation of the right identities [react] by demonstratively enforcing elements of identity building which are problematized” (Lindekilde, 2016, p. 63). Reactive pride resembles aspects of self-stigmatization, where rather than accepting an identity marker as negative, individuals and groups instead turn it into a symbol of pride. Jämte and Ellefsen (2020a), in their study on the consequences of soft repression directed against radical leftist groups in Sweden, find some evidence of this occurring. They suggest that the label applied by Swedish state agencies of ‘violence-affirming extremists’ can cause “confirmation, where the labeling creates an aura of radicalness that facilitates contacts between radicals and increases distrust of institutional politics” (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020a, p. 398). Amongst the individuals involved in this study, a similar process exists. As Daniel says:

Colm: You mentioned there this picture of good and evil activists [in society], what does that mean?

Daniel: Some parts of the left, when something goes wrong, or something looks bad, they say that's not us, that's the bad ones. And that's an idea, which we, probably because of experiences with contact with other groups and especially political parties, have an idea that's that not what we should do. Even if we think another extra-parliamentary group does something completely crazy, we don't go out and condemn it in the media. Or make a statement that we think they did wrong this time, because that's not our task. And when you take on that picture that painted of you and strengthen it, and make it into your own self-image, that we are the dangerous, we represent violence and power, it has its purpose, maybe most of all against Nazis, that they are scared that AFA exists, and that AFA will come and beat you if you become a Nazi, it helps make it so that fewer people want to become Nazis, basically. And that's good. But when we print stickers with weapons and where people are masked, it's easy to point at us and say 'these are crazy people with masks and weapons.' You play along in the drama then, you have created yourself that you are like 'the baddies', you want that feeling sometimes. It's cool. You fetishize that feeling that you are dangerous and special, sort of. I think that's very common. But sometimes, people think it's everything or the basic idea, it's not that either, there's almost always another thought.

Daniel argues that the while the popular picture of the extra-parliamentary left is painted by others, extra-parliamentary leftists 'strengthen' that image and 'make it their own.' Extra-parliamentary leftists, at times, aim to portray themselves as dangerous to society, and as a special type of group. However, while Daniel does suggest that the picture is painted by others, he nuances the idea that this is solely a reactive process. Rather, I argue here that in response to labeling and stigmatization attempts by the police and the security services, the extra-parliamentary left engages in *ecstatic self-stigmatization*. In ecstatic self-stigmatization, individuals "identify with the symbols of guilt" and "accept and take on the role of the scapegoat" (Heidegren & Wästerfors, 2019, p. 207). Individuals and groups further channel the stigma, "not only [assenting] to the label, but [utilizing] the label as a fulfilling means of self-expression, personal identity, and social effectiveness" (Rogers & Buffalo, 1974, p. 109). As Daniel notes, the extra-parliamentary left not only accepts an identity as 'evil activists', but even uses this identity as a political strategy, particularly in the fight against fascism or Nazism. While ecstatic self-stigmatization may arise through

interactions in the security arena, with actors like the police or Säpo, in accepting the label of violence-affirming extremists, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that interactions with individuals who are or may become Nazis are affected. These opponents, or potential opponents, are constructed as scared or afraid, in Daniel's words.

As I noted in Chapter 3, Strauss (1959/1977) points out that the impact of the label others place on us varies depending on whether we can afford to ignore their judgement or not. Extra-parliamentary leftists are unable to ignore the violence-affirming label that the state representatives place upon them. However, this does not mean that they must accept it, on the terms the others wish. Rather than discouraging the extra-parliamentary left, the extra-parliamentary left uses the label to further demonstrate their positive or special characteristics. Neo-Nazis, and more broadly, society, are scared of the extra-parliamentary left, in this understanding. Again, this provides further proof of both the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left and as confirmation of a deviant identity. Nonetheless, again, this process occurs in interaction. It can, therefore, also fail in interaction, presenting problems for the self-image of extra-parliamentary leftists.

Usually, the interactions between extra-parliamentary leftists and representatives of the state (almost always, the police) occur at demonstrations. Prior to the demonstration against AFS in May 2019 (see p. 17), I stood chatting with three male participants at Stortorget in Malmö. While the politicians from AFS had yet to arrive, the police had placed metal grates around an area of the square where they would hold their speeches. We stood about 15 meters from the grates, discussing not only the coming demonstration but also the previous weekend, where one individual had attended a birthday party with 'too much alcohol' that they 'were still recovering from.' As we stood there, a police officer approached and joined the circle. He was an older man, probably about 45-50 years old, with a greying beard. He had the air of an older uncle, attempting to demonstrate his concern for younger relatives. The following interaction took place:

Police officer: Hey, lads! What's the plan for tonight? You guys gonna keep it calm?

(No one responds. We stand there silently, making no eye contact with either each other or him. About 20-30 seconds pass. He remains standing there.)

Police officer: So what do you guys do? You guys study?

(Silence continues for another 20-30 seconds. He prepares to walk away.)

Police officer: Alright, make sure to stay out of trouble tonight, boys!

In this interaction, the police officer treats the extra-parliamentary leftists (and me) as a threat. He warns us against the use of violence or of doing anything to disrupt the order. Yet, rather than feeling chastised by the police officer, the participants reject the police officer's authority. Instead, they take on the label of violent extremists, refusing to respond to his comments and refusing to acknowledge him. As he makes his final comment and walks away, both the police officer and the extra-parliamentary leftists smile and laugh quietly, as if both parties are aware that the police officer makes his comments in jest. We see a clear example of the channeling process here. These individuals consent to and use the label of violent extremist to portray themselves as dangerous. They want the police to worry, and for AFS's demonstrators to feel unsafe.



Description: A picture published in *Sydsvenskan* of the scene at Stortorget during the demonstration against AFS. See Thörnkvist (2019) or SVT (2019b).

In doing so, they engage in ecstatic self-stigmatization, willing to suffer the consequences of this identity to attempt to demonstrate that it is not them who should be stigmatized, but the society that allows movements like AFS to exist. Rather than deviants, the extra-parliamentary left is instead more moral than the

surrounding society, in this construction. And at this demonstration, with individuals willing to bear the consequences of their actions, 8 individuals were detained and two were arrested for their actions (Thörnkvist, 2019). In interactions like this one, the ecstatic self-stigmatization of the extra-parliamentary left succeeds. The police treat extra-parliamentary leftists as dangerous, arresting individuals or engaging in violence to prevent a demonstration from achieving its goals. While the general relation between the extra-parliamentary left and state security forces tends to be one of soft repression, it can turn to hard repression in these moments. This can even happen weeks after a demonstration, as several individuals were called to a police interrogation in the weeks following the May 1st demonstration in Malmö, usually for crimes relating to the disruption of order.

Amongst the groups involved in the extra-parliamentary left, AFA most specifically uses the image of the dangerous extremist. In many of their stickers and posters, AFA emphasizes that fascists should be afraid of them, and AFA portrays itself as willing to engage in violence against them. Furthermore, as one former member of AFA said in an interview, anti-fascism has a tendency to become 'phrase radical' with mottos such as 'no pasaran' or 'never forgive. Never forget.' Individuals want to portray themselves as dangerous. It is not only AFA who uses this aesthetic. I argue that almost all individuals in the extra-parliamentary left engage in ecstatic self-stigmatization to some degree. For example, the cover of a book commemorating the 10-year existence of Amalthea, a book café that is explicitly not an action group, has a motif of a masked demonstrator. Similarly, during the 2018 May 1st demonstration in Malmö, individuals 'dropped' a banner which explicitly threatened terrorist action. Individuals in the extra-parliamentary left want to be seen as dangerous, and as a threat to the disruption of societal order.

However, this type of self-stigmatization requires that the police and security services continue to treat the extra-parliamentary left as a threat. Individuals have difficulties channeling an image of themselves as violent extremists when others do not treat them this way in interaction. For example, on May 1st during the pandemic year of 2021, when demonstrations were outlawed in Sweden, one extra-parliamentary group instead had a small hang-out in a park. The group served coffee and had a merchandise table as a means of providing a place for individuals to gather and celebrate May 1st. At one point in the afternoon, four police officers arrived. There was a general worry that the police would try to shut

down the gathering, as it was illegal under the emergency pandemic measures passed in Sweden. Alice went over to speak with them. When she returned from speaking with the police officers, Alice appeared to be struggling not to laugh, wearing a wry smile. As she retook her seat, she exclaimed ‘Fucking hell, how sossig are we. The police just said it looks good’ (*Field Notes*). If we step back from the context and return to a thick description of this event, the event involved a group of about 30-50 individuals, many of them with small children and babies, sitting on blankets in small groups drinking coffee. While there was an AFA flag present, there were almost no other markers distinguishing this gathering from a gathering for any other organization, movement, or group sitting in a park on a sunny day. As it was constructed above, there is nothing radical about this event. The official guardians of order (the police) observe and approve of the action. No perceived labeling or stigmatization process occurred.



Description: The left picture shows an AFA sticker. The picture on the right displays the dropped banner from May 1st 2018. The banner names Amalthea 1908, where a ship with strike breakers was blown up, and attempts to suggest that something similar will happen in 2018. The Southern Club took credit for the action.

Ecstatic self-stigmatization, and the channeling of the dangerous extremist label allow the extra-parliamentary left to not only continue to display a distinctive collective identity, but also are a means of dealing with a judgement that cannot be ignored. The social power of state representatives makes their classification of the extra-parliamentary left as violence-affirming extremists unavoidable. However, in ecstatic self-stigmatization, the extra-parliamentary left can use this

label as evidence of the threat the community poses to the social order in Sweden. Yet, the process of ecstatic self-stigmatization requires that state actors continue to treat and interact with the extra-parliamentary left in a repressive manner. Essentially, channeling a stigma is dependent upon a stigmatization process. As in the example from the park, when there is no attempt at stigmatization, but rather approval and legitimation, the radical identity of the extra-parliamentary left becomes difficult to uphold. The extra-parliamentary left, instead, could again merely pass as another *sossiga* political movement, which does not disrupt societal order. Yet while interactions with the police, SAP, and LO are important in the self-stigmatization process, the institutional political actor the extra-parliamentary left interacts with most is the Left Party. I therefore now turn to the Socialist arena, and the exhibitionist self-stigmatization that characterizes the actions of extra-parliamentary leftists there.

6.4 The Socialist Arena: Exhibitionist Self-Stigmatization

As the report Wennerhag and Jämte (2019) produced shows, the extra-parliamentary left has increasingly organized and acted around local political issues, rather than global matters. Similarly, the extra-parliamentary left has increasingly cooperated more with other political actors, rather than remaining disconnected from other actors in the Swedish political landscape. The closest, and arguably most preferred, political actor to the extra-parliamentary left is the Left Party (VP). Jämte et al. (2020, p. 22) go so far as to suggest that the current preferred political strategy for the extra-parliamentary left is “organization-level collaboration with actors outside of the movement” such as “left-wing political parties.” Jämte (2017, p. 262) even argues elsewhere that “radicals [are] leaving their usual extra-parliamentary arena to become involved...with left, Green, or feminist political parties.” Previous research therefore suggests that the lines between the extra-parliamentary left and the parliamentary left in Sweden are becoming increasingly blurred. However, Keith (2017, pp. 57, 58) nuances this picture, noting that “there is more room for [cooperation] in local rather than national politics” and arguing that contrary to political developments in Southern Europe, VP has “struggled to develop close links to newly emergent radical left

movements.” Questions therefore remain surrounding whether we should understand the extra-parliamentary left as the radical flank of a broader leftist movement, or whether we should see the extra-parliamentary left and VP as two distinct but closely related leftist groups. Although we see signs of increasing cooperation in Malmö, I argue here that VP and the extra-parliamentary left remain two separate groups, as extra-parliamentary leftists continue to engage in *exhibitionist self-stigmatization* as a means of distinguishing their collective identity from VP.

Heidegren and Wästerfors (2019, p. 207) define exhibitionist self-stigmatization as a process through which individuals “expose a defect, a stigma, and at the same time transform it into a marker of nobility.” They further argue that “in exposing their stigma, it becomes a part of an identity project which shows who one truly is” (Heidegren & Wästerfors, 2019, p. 207). Goffman (1963/1990, p. 138) identifies a similar phenomenon in his discussion of in-group politics amongst the stigmatized, noting that individuals, at times, chose to “flaunt some stereotypical attributes which [they] could easily cover.” In his discussion of in-group politics, Goffman (1963/1990, p. 137) further identifies a potential conflict in loyalties amongst the stigmatized, arguing that when the stigmatized actors “turn to [their] group, [they are] loyal and authentic; if [they] turn away, [they are] craven and a fool.” Amongst actors who suffer stigmatization, questions arise whether they should be committed to others who suffer the same stigma, or whether they should be loyal to the surrounding society. In essence, the question revolves around whether one should accept the social order that leads to the stigmatization, or whether one should reject that social order and instead challenge or attempt to transform it. It is this question that characterizes the relationship between VP and the extra-parliamentary left. Extra-parliamentary leftists view individuals within VP as belonging to the same group, but as craven and unwilling to fully break with the structures of the surrounding society. Furthermore, in taking pride in their identity as revolutionary socialists, rather than what they characterize as the reformist socialism of VP, individuals portray themselves as more aware of Swedish political realities and more realistic about how the goals of a socialist project can be realized. Yet, there remains always a feeling that the extra-parliamentary left and VP ‘are on the same side’, and that VP is merely confused. However, while the extra-parliamentary left may define the situation this way, members of VP appear not to agree that there is an issue between some parts of the extra-parliamentary left and VP. Rather, they argue

that both groups belong to the same movement, with merely different roles. In order to maintain their distinctiveness, the extra-parliamentary left therefore engages in exhibitionist self-stigmatization, to attempt to force members of VP to recognize the felt differences between the two groups, and to attempt to expose the surrounding society for the ‘misguided’ socialists in VP.

During my time in the field, at least one event was held as a collaboration between an extra-parliamentary group (in this case, Everything for Everyone) and VP⁶¹. At this event, Everything for Everyone and VP held a film viewing for the documentary *PUSH*, which discusses issues with the housing market and the commodification of housing in cities across the world. After the documentary, a panel conversation between four people took place. Amongst the four individuals were two members of Everything for Everyone and two members of VP. All the panel members agreed that Malmö is facing a housing crisis and that a solution was needed to make housing more affordable in Malmö. They also agreed that one of the major obstacles in finding a solution was the local SAP leadership, with one of the VP representatives stating, ‘*the big problem is the social democrats in Malmö*’ (*Field Notes*). However, the two groups disagreed regarding the proper political strategy to pursue a solution. The representatives from Everything for Everyone strongly argued that the solution could only be found through social movement activity, mass mobilization, and advocated for the use of rent strikes. Conversely, while the representatives from VP supported increased social movement mobilization, they consistently highlighted the importance of making changes to the law and finding solutions within the city government, highlighting the motions VP in Malmö had attempted to pass in various local boards. In response, the representatives from Everything for Everyone argued that ‘*the city has no power*’ over the development of housing commodification, and that solutions could only be found outside the system (*Field notes*). The Everything for Everyone members portrayed the VP representatives as unrealistic, naïve, and unwilling to do what is necessary to improve the housing situation for residents of Malmö. Here, we see a clear reversal of the usual narrative surrounding the differences between extra-parliamentary and parliamentary politics. Rather than portraying the extra-parliamentary actors as immature or unrealistic, Everything for Everyone instead presents themselves as the mature, realistic alternative. For

⁶¹ This appears, to have become more common in the last year, as VP and Everything for Everyone held several events together in 2021.

the extra-parliamentary left, solutions can only be found in disrupting the social order and acting outside the institutional political system. Leftist actors who instead advocate for working inside the system are, in Goffman's words, fools, to the extra-parliamentary leftists.

If a differing willingness to disrupt the system forms one of the distinctions between the extra-parliamentary left and VP, another arises in terms of questions about representativeness. Here, the issue relates to who political actions represent, whether it is merely the individuals or if there is an organization who must be represented. We can see this in another event, which both VP and Everything for Everyone advertised for. After the parliamentary election in 2018, VP organized a demonstration at Möllevångstorget under the headline 'We are standing strong! No influence to the racists!' Everything for Everyone then created a separate Facebook event encouraging their followers on Facebook and supporters to attend the demonstration. The event had the title 'Everyone to the Square.' While the demonstration was clearly organized by VP, it is equally clear from the way Everything for Everyone writes about the event that they see VP as on the same political side, in a broader context. For example, in the event text, they write "Come with us to the meeting at Möllevångstorget to show a Malmö that fights together against the right, and for a future worth believing in" (Allt åt alla, 2018). Yet, in the event description, we also find Everything for Everyone's position on the question of representativeness. They write "We in Malmö have many times showed how strong we are when we fight together. We showed it during the refugee crisis. We showed it after the stabbings in 2014, and we can show it again" (Allt åt alla, 2018). Here, Everything for Everyone argues clearly that it is individuals who act politically on their convictions, rather than the organizations who represent these individuals. Extra-parliamentary leftists argue that one major difference between parliamentary politics and extra-parliamentary politics is that they do not need to act on behalf of anyone else, but that they only represent themselves. As Ingrid says:

Colm: What do you think is the difference between party politics and extra-parliamentary politics? Is there a difference?

Ingrid: Yea, I think there is. I think party politics is more locked, you act within a given system, according to given rules, representative democracy is about being chosen, then you can rule if you get chosen, while extra-parliamentary politics is about acting yourself, according to a really loose framework, you decide how you

want to organize it, what you do...it's much easier to represent yourself, because in the parliamentary it's built in that you should represent others and not yourself, while the autonomous or extra-parliamentary movement strives for representing itself.

Ingrid highlights that, in extra-parliamentary politics, she believes individuals can be true to themselves. They do not need to consider what others believe but can instead do what they believe is best. Extra-parliamentary politics, then, means not having to sacrifice ideals to adhere to 'the rules of the game', individuals can instead display their true identity. Kalle reasons similarly, in discussing what he sees as the differences between VP and the extra-parliamentary left:

Colm: What do you think are the differences between VP and the extra-parliamentary movement?

Kalle: There are no big differences in practice. At the same time, they are an organization whose leadership supports the government, there is a difference. I don't mistrust the local VP at all, they have basically the same values, but they are a part of a structure that de facto defends and maintains the current system...it influences how you portray yourself, if you think you need to have a good image to the public, VP basically tries to dupe the public.

Kalle suggests here the VP tries to trick the surrounding society and tries to conceal their true colors. Extra-parliamentary leftists, conversely, exhibit their socialist identities, rather than hiding them for acceptance in the conventional society. Kalle argues that members of VP are not truly 'normals' (Goffman, 1963/1990), but rather that they are extremely similar to the members of the extra-parliamentary left. If VP was to stop concealing its true face, there would be no differences between VP and the extra-parliamentary left, as Kalle notes that 'there are no big differences in practice', but since they do not, they remain separate groups. An interesting question arises here as to what degree members of VP see members of the extra-parliamentary left as members of the same movement. While there are clear differences in stigmatization between involvement in the extra-parliamentary left and involvement in VP, one member describes the ideology of members of the Malmö branch of VP this way:

Colm: How would you describe VP as an organization?

Anders: ... it's an organization where about 80% of all members would call themselves socialists or some type of anti-capitalist ideology, but who see it as a necessity to work within the current system on the way there [to an anti-capitalist society]...but then VP Malmö is even more different, compared with other VP organizations, I'm not sure I would have been so active as I am now if I was organized somewhere else, there's a different culture here. There's more acceptance that people are further left than what VP normally is, and more cooperation with the extra-parliamentary left. It's not uncommon that members in VP join Everything for Everyone, and then come back to VP, or are engaged in both at the same time.

Anders argues here that VP Malmö is a special part of the broader VP organization, further left in terms of ideology and with more acceptance for other forms of political organization. He suggests that it is not uncommon that individuals move between the two different forms of political engagement and claims that it is not uncommon for individuals to even at times be involved in both the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary left. Here, I want to note that I saw little evidence of this in my field work and am unsure as to the degree that this occurs. However, if we return to Jämte's (2017) findings above, he has a similar understanding of the relation between VP and the extra-parliamentary left. Anders notes that VP has no problem cooperating with the extra-parliamentary left, and appears to view the two groups as complementary, rather than competitors. Tove, another member of VP, argues similarly.

Colm: Do you think there's an important difference between being in a party versus an extra-parliamentary group?

Tove: ...I would say that, I come from the extra-parliamentary movement, and I don't think you can only make a difference in parliament, but instead it's outside of parliament where you can actually make a big difference, and I don't think that in most contexts there's any contradiction, you can be in a party and still work with extra-parliamentary groups, in different ways.

Tove suggests that there is little difference between the extra-parliamentary left and VP, arguing that at least most of the time, there is no contradiction between the two forms of political engagement. She even goes so far as to suggest that it is 'outside of parliament' where big changes occur. Both Tove and Anders appear to view the extra-parliamentary left as the radical flank of VP, rather than as

something unrelated or existing in competition. However, I want to emphasize here that I only interviewed three individuals in VP and did not perform any ethnographic observation with VP. I am therefore unsure as to how representative the views of Tove and Anders are for general tendencies within VP. For at least these three individuals however, there is no issue or conflict between VP and the extra-parliamentary left. Yet, even if this is the case within VP, for extra-parliamentary leftists, there remains a sense of mistrust and skepticism towards VP, even within Malmö. Hans puts it this way:

Colm: How do you decide which other groups to work with?

Hans: We are really pragmatic when it comes to who we cooperate with...you have to always keep in mind when you work together with VP that because it's a party, it's in their nature that you are going to be stabbed in the back. But you can count on that. Just as they probably would feel if we had a demonstration, and it went out of control that we stabbed them in the back. But it's different views on politics. But as long as it works it's good. And that's why we can sometimes clash with others in our movement because they think that we're selling out or are reformists. You should always be worried about pragmatism, of course, and they maybe have a point sometimes...

Hans argues here that because VP 'is a party', it will never to be loyal to the extra-parliamentary left, and by extension, the socialist cause, rather than the political structure or the public image of VP. It is this that highlights the differences between VP and the extra-parliamentary left, for extra-parliamentary leftists. For members of the extra-parliamentary left, it is a point of pride that they are socialists and that they operate outside of the political system. As I explored above in reference to the police and the social democratic society, the extra-parliamentary left does not want to be seen as normal or conventional. They, instead, want to be different and want to disrupt the normal societal order. In relations with VP, they thus often engage in exhibitionist self-stigmatization as a means of demonstrating their loyalty to their own group. They are so committed to the mutual socialist cause of VP and the extra-parliamentary left that they are willing to suffer the stigma that accompanies it. Conversely, individuals in VP are interpreted as refusing to own the stigma associated with socialism. They instead are loyal to the 'normals' and the current system that works to stigmatize the extra-parliamentary left, attempting to conceal their true beliefs about political action. Despite these differences, neither group doubts that they should be part of the

same political project or that they share broadly similar goals. The local VP members even appear to not recognize any issues in their cooperation with the extra-parliamentary left. In most cases, this allows the groups to work together unproblematically, particularly in interactions against shared enemies, such as fascists or right-wing parties.

In his study on housing activism in Los Angeles, Lichterman (2021) distinguishes between groups who act as a ‘community of identity’ and those who act as a ‘community of interest.’ He argues that in a community of identity “participants assume they should coordinate themselves as fellow members of a community resisting ongoing threats from the powers that be” while in a community of interest “participants treat each other as loyal partners pursuing a specific goal limited to an issue for which they share concern” (Lichterman, 2021, p. 28). Members of the extra-parliamentary left assume that leftists should act like a community of identity. Rather than working within the dominant system, they should instead aim to disrupt the social order and refuse to acknowledge its legitimacy. Conversely, members of VP are perceived as acting as a community of interest. Rather than showing their loyalty and commitment to fellow group members, they instead act towards achieving specific goals like changing a local housing ordinance. It is this that can lead to conflict between the extra-parliamentary left and VP, as extra-parliamentary leftists view VP as too willing to sacrifice the community for the sake of an issue. VP, in this understanding, fails to remember that they should be loyal to the anti-capitalists, rather than the normals. The willingness to not belong to the conventional political order becomes not only a point of pride for extra-parliamentary leftists in their interactions with VP, but also even a key facet of the distinctive collective identity of the extra-parliamentary left.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have explored and analyzed the interactions of the extra-parliamentary left in the broader political arenas of Swedish society, focusing on how extra-parliamentary leftists achieve stigma. Here, I have argued that the extra-parliamentary left often engages in a process of self-stigmatization. Extra-parliamentary leftists view the surrounding, conventional society as boring, and characterize other leftist political groups as unwilling to disrupt societal order.

Rather than seeking conflict, extra-parliamentary leftists view reformist leftist actors as too willing to cooperate with non-leftist actors. Although extra-parliamentary leftists are aware of the norms of conventional society, and often have no trouble passing within Swedish society, the extra-parliamentary left attempts to stand out from other Swedish political actors through a willingness to disrupt order, and a willingness to cross lines which other political actors do not. When this occurs, the extra-parliamentary left becomes a distinct or radical political movement, rather than merely another political actor in the Swedish political arena.

Particularly in interactions with actors thought to represent the social democratic establishment in Sweden, like LO or SAP, extra-parliamentary leftists often engage in provocative self-stigmatization. Through provocative self-stigmatization, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to force LO and SAP to recognize and react to the extra-parliamentary left. In these reactions, extra-parliamentary leftists seek not only for these organizations to reveal themselves as not truly leftists, but also confirmation of the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left as radical movement. In this manner, extra-parliamentary leftists can achieve stigma, and demonstrate that they do not belong to the social democratic establishment but are instead a revolutionary actor.

Similarly, in interactions with the police or Swedish security forces, extra-parliamentary leftists often engage in ecstatic self-stigmatization. Through ecstatic self-stigmatization, extra-parliamentary leftists accept the label of dangerous or violence-affirming extremists and make it into a part of their identity. In this way, extra-parliamentary leftists can manage a judgement on their identity and activities from representatives of the state that they cannot ignore and turn it into an aspect of the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left. However, the process of ecstatic self-stigmatization relies on the police or state representatives continuing to treat the extra-parliamentary left as a threat. When this does not occur, the extra-parliamentary left ceases to be radical or distinctive and can instead become merely another conventional political actor.

The final political actor groups and individuals in the extra-parliamentary left often interact with is the Left Party. While extra-parliamentary leftists often view individuals in the Left Party as on the same political side, they also can view the Left Party as too willing to compromise with the political establishment in Sweden. Extra-parliamentary leftists therefore can engage in exhibitionist self-stigmatization in interactions with the Left Party, demonstrating their loyalty to

the socialist movement and attempting to remind members of the Left Party that they should also be loyal to socialism and socialists, rather than the conventional, surrounding society. Through these different self-stigmatization processes, the extra-parliamentary left becomes a distinctive political actor in Swedish politics, willing to challenge and break the norms surrounding political action. However, the extra-parliamentary left must constantly recreate and force others to recognize this distinctiveness, or risk becoming merely another conventional actor in the Swedish political arena.

7 Becoming Autonomous

In the end, it is so much what you are born for. Some are born to uncritically belong to this society, live in it, and profit in it. Others are not.” (Sandén, 2007, p. 258)

In Chapter 2, I argued that a politics of community shares a theory of change with prefigurative politics. The existence of a distinctive way of life creates the potential for change at not only the societal level, but also at the individual level. Within a politics of community, groups demonstrate a recognizable and distinguishable collection of habits which can advertise and promote the group to individuals in the surrounding society. For individuals who have joined the extra-parliamentary left, the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left was a vital consideration in their decision to become involved in this activity. Yet, as I highlighted in Chapter 3, just as we learn to be human, we also learn to become members of a group. As Scott (2016, p. 139, emphasis original) notes “identities are processes of *becoming*, rather than simply *being*, certain types of person.” No one is born an extra-parliamentary leftist, all individuals involved with the extra-parliamentary left have become or are becoming extra-parliamentary leftists. In this chapter, I examine this process of becoming an extra-parliamentary leftist. While the distinctiveness of the community must be considered, I also explore how individuals come to recognize the distinctiveness of the community and how that distinctiveness becomes attractive, rather than repulsive. As a stigmatized and deviant group, I further argue that both initial and continued participation in the extra-parliamentary left should be understood more in line with studies on deviance, such as Becker’s (1953) classic study on marijuana use, rather than in pure ideological terms.

Yet, in considering participation in the extra-parliamentary left in this manner, a related question arises. Namely, in considering who becomes involved in the extra-parliamentary left and how they become involved, we must also consider who never has the opportunity to join the extra-parliamentary left. Scott (2018,

p. 8) calls this process “non-becoming” which involves “key encounters with others that lead an actor away from, rather than towards, a potential social identity.” In this context, it is not necessarily labelling that is important, but rather that some individuals remain unaware of either the existence of the extra-parliamentary left or are unaware of how to join the extra-parliamentary left. Here, I argue that we can at least partly answer this question not only in studying the process of becoming an extra-parliamentary leftist, but also in examining how recruitment to the extra-parliamentary left occurs. When extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to attract others to the community, they have a specific audience in mind. Examining the construction of this audience, then, also helps us to understand who has the opportunity to become involved, and who members of the extra-parliamentary left consider as potential members.

This chapter therefore proceeds as follows. First, I explore the early socialization of extra-parliamentary leftists, arguing that the development of *leftist habits* plays a crucial role in later decisions. For the individuals in this study, leftist habits are mainly developed in primary socialization through interactions with significant others such as parents or friends. Second, I examine how individuals find the extra-parliamentary left, and argue for the importance of what Strauss (1978) refers to as *orbiting processes*. Individuals often find the extra-parliamentary left through involvement in related activities and neighboring social worlds, rather than making a direct decision to seek out the extra-parliamentary left. Third, I discuss how individuals joined the extra-parliamentary left, demonstrating the importance of moral tension (Lofland & Stark, 1965), allures (Prus & Grills, 2003), and social ties. Here, the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left is a key feature in the decision-making processes of individuals. Finally, I examine why individuals maintain participation in the extra-parliamentary left, arguing that it depends upon feelings of community and commitment. In each of these sections, I also investigate how the recruitment and mobilization processes of the extra-parliamentary left are linked to the experiences of extra-parliamentary leftists and note what this means for which individuals and groups are likely to join the community. In proceeding this way, this chapter therefore answers the second research question of this dissertation *how and why do individuals become extra-parliamentary leftists?*

7.1 Developing Consciousness

Colm: What do you think the best strategy to create a movement or recruit more individuals would be today?

Hugo: I don't know actually...I think what one could do is continue to build the infrastructure we have, and then when things happen, be on the ball and get engaged in it. Like things people want, things people feel have to be taken care of, this is something we have to do, that people feel that something is really important. Create a feeling of that it is important, but it's hard to create that feeling. But people get those feelings themselves. Because obviously people don't think that capital and the power dynamic in our society is such a big problem for them that they want to destroy it now. There isn't that mood in society.

Involvement in the extra-parliamentary left arises out of several factors. However, amongst the most crucial factors is the development of a leftist consciousness, or what Hugo discusses here as a feeling that something is important and that something must be done. Hugo argues that this creating this feeling would help draw more individuals to the extra-parliamentary left, but he also suggests that it a difficult feeling to create in individuals. Rather, this is a feeling that people 'get themselves.' Following the interactionist perspective developed in Chapter 3, I argue that this feeling develops as individuals learn to define situations in a certain manner. Individuals must learn to identify certain aspects of the society around them as wrong, unfair, or unjust. For the participants in this study, the development of a leftist political consciousness begins very early in their lives. No interview participant, or field informant, identifies a true turning point in their understanding of society. Rather, individuals suggest that they grew up in households and areas characterized by significant others (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991) who had some type of leftist political ideology. However, while the participants share this in common, their political socialization can be separated into two different types. The first group consists of participants who had parents who were active in different political groups and these individuals often accompanied their parents to different political engagements, from a very young age. Alternatively, the second group contains individuals whose parents were not active in political groups, but they may still have attended demonstrations with their families as young children, and recall specific instances of significant others

defining situations, occurrences, or structures as wrong. In both cases, the participants develop what I call leftist habits.

I begin with the first group. Marie is a woman in her late 20s who moved to Malmö about ten years ago. At the time of our interview, she had participated in extra-parliamentary activism for over ten years, starting towards the end of her teenage years. In discussing her first memories of politics, she says:

Colm: When was the first time you considered joining a political group?

Marie: Very early, I have, both of my parents were in the Left Party when I grew up, so when I was really really small they often took me to meetings, and a lot of my friends had political parents and were political in different ways...

Colm: What do you remember of the meetings? How did you find them?

Marie: Boring. I was really small so I only thought they were really boring and like sat under a table and read comic books...this was when I maybe was too small to be left alone, and maybe it was an election campaign, and you got to sit and help and sort ballot papers, I don't know if it was so fun.

Describing her first experiences with politics, Marie notes that she was too young to really know what was happening at these political meetings for the Left Party. However, she emphasizes that politics was always present and living in her life, as both her parents and the parents of her friends were politically active. At a later point in our interview, she suggests that this was not uncommon in the town where she grew up, but that a leftist, political atmosphere characterized the town. As she says:

Colm: Was it obvious for you to be leftist? Or did you think--

Marie: No, it was always pretty obvious. As long as I can remember all my friends have been leftist but not like in extra-parliamentary groups directly, but I don't know, there were probably more in the school classes I was in who had parents who were leftist than not. [The town] is really weird in that way. Very, very red. No, I've never really felt that my opinions have changed so much.

Marie describes the setting in which she grew up as 'very, very red', suggesting that not only were the majority of her schoolmates from leftist families, but that the town itself was a leftist environment. In her retelling, she did not have to make

a choice to become a leftist, but it was the obvious and natural consequence of her upbringing. Each of the significant others she identifies in this retelling, from parents to friends, contributed to this socialization process, and in making leftism the 'natural' or taken-for-granted political stance. Within the extra-parliamentary left, Marie is not an outlier in describing this type of upbringing. Instead, this is a common narrative. Individuals suggest that they have always been leftist, if not extra-parliamentary leftist, because of the families or towns in which they grew up. For example, Emil tells a similar story. Emil is a man in his early 30s who has been active in the extra-parliamentary left for over 15 years, and first begun to participate in his mid-teens.

Colm: Do you remember the first time you thought about politics?

Emil: Ah, that's a tricky question. My parents belong to the Left Party environment, but in the Marxist-Leninist direction, Maoists basically, and even my grandparents, so there has always been a political consciousness in the family so it's hard to say a specific time when I got interested because it's always been so living at home...

Again, Emil emphasizes that there was never a question of developing a political consciousness, but that it was a natural consequence of his family environment. In his words, politics was always 'living at home' and he highlights that his parents were not only involved in the Left Party, but that they were even Marxists or Maoists. He learned to see the world through this leftist lens in primary socialization. Both Marie and Emil serve as representatives of this first group of individuals, who see their political opinions as a natural outgrowth of the environments they grew up in. For them, leftist habits have always been natural and taken-for-granted. The question for these individuals has never revolved around which ideology or political stance is correct in general terms, but rather which specific leftist political group or movement is appropriate for them. Anders, in this context, presents an interesting combination of the first and second groups. Anders is a man in his early 40s who moved to Malmö about 15 years ago after a period living outside of Sweden. He was first politically active in his mid-teens and early 20s, prior to disengaging from activism for a period, when he lived outside of Sweden. He had been politically active again for 5 years at the time of our interview. Anders describes his parents as interested in environmental issues, but not necessarily interested in politics.

Colm: So you talked a little bit about your friends there, but was it common in your family to talk about politics?

Anders: No, not really. My parents have been active in, for the environment, the environmental movement, they have supported different things, like, what are they called, WWF and things like that, I think they have voted for the Green Party a bunch of times...although both my parents have very much social-democratic values. They like the People's home, they stand for its values, you know, it should be solidaric, you should be against racism, and so on....but they have no experience of politics, they have never organized themselves. So when we talked about politics it was more, 'Carl Bildt, what is he doing? He's really bad. Or like uh, the social democrats have let us down again,' and so on. But not ideologically, in that way, they more just like environmental politics, you could say.

Anders draws a crucial distinction here, framing the engagement of his parents in environmental politics as non-ideological. They were not, according to him, engaged in something that they believe in or that was a part of themselves, but they instead participate because they like it. It did not involve commitment and was not an identity project. He instead suggests that his parents were basically social democrats. Returning to the discussion in the previous chapter, Anders sees his parents as very conventional social democratic Swedes. He goes on later in the interview to emphasize that he grew up with social democratic values. In response to a question about how he thought new individuals joined the extra-parliamentary left, Anders develops a critique of the current strategies of both his group and other groups. He argues that not only do political groups need ideology, but that they must also have an educational program and a means of developing an ideology that relates to an individual's everyday life. Towards the end of his response (which is 9 minutes long), Anders returns to why he thinks this way about creating a more welcoming place for new individuals. He states:

...This is how I was raised, my parents, you know, they have always had an eye for it, like, invite your friend over, tell him he can sleep over, you know he is welcome here because his parents are alcoholics, you know. That's how they had it, and they have always like talked with my friends or schoolmates who have had those problems, which they have seen, they have, they always, you know, so I got the values that you, you, the People's Home. Everyone should be with, it's like a lived socialism, that's the People's Home. You should take care of others, there should be open doors, you know, people can come and eat and hang. And that's basically the ground of my criticism of the left today. Everything ties together.

Although he does not identify his parents as ideological, Anders nonetheless argues that they practiced a type of ‘lived socialism’ when he was growing up, which still forms the grounds for his political beliefs today. The values he sees reflected in his current political engagement are the same as the ones he was raised with, with the addition of ideology or theory. It is in this sense that Anders has more in common with the second group of participants, although his parents were engaged in at least quasi-political organizations. For the second group of participants, although they do not describe either their family or their environment as politically active or vibrant, they still argue that they were raised with values similar to the ones they hold today. Primary socialization and early significant others continue to play a crucial role in the development of their leftist habits. Saga, for example, is a woman in her early 30s who grew up in southern Sweden. She moved to Malmö in her late teens and has been active in the extra-parliamentary left since shortly before this move to Malmö. Like Anders, she does not describe her parents as politically active:

Colm: Did you think about politics much when you were young?

Saga: Oh, so much!... I remember that it was pretty obvious to be politically interested when I went to high school....

Colm: You said there that it was obvious to be interested in politics, was it at all common in your family?

Saga: Yea, my parents are both leftists, basically, and everyone is pretty conscious, but there was no one who was politically active. I remember that we went to the May 1st demonstration when I was small, ah, so I guess there was that.

Although Saga says that her parents were not politically active, she still notes that they were leftists who were ‘pretty conscious’ and Saga remembers attending first of May demonstrations as a young child. Just as Marie did above, Saga also suggests that it was obvious for her to be interested in politics and that the environment she grew up in had political traits. She exemplifies this at a later point in our interview, when we discussed why she joined her first political group:

...My family has talked lots about politics. My mom was very feminist and tried to raise me in a feminist manner through saying that I couldn’t watch tv shows that she thought had bad female role models, so we had that discussion... and I

remember when I was really small, I said, but dad, why don't they just take all the money and give equal amounts to everyone in the world? And that dad looked at me with a small smile and just, I remember it, he probably didn't say it exactly as I remember, yea, it's already starting with ideology then. So I have, obviously, always been a communist in spirit (laughs)...

Saga jokingly argues here that she has always been a communist. She also recounts this specific interaction with her dad as part of the process of learning about ideology, politics, and injustice. Similarly, she highlights the importance of discussions she had with her mom and her mom's feminism as important in her upbringing. In her retelling, it is again natural for her to be a leftist today, growing up in this environment with these significant others. Even for individuals who grew up with parents who were not politically active, extra-parliamentary leftists tend to argue that they have always been leftist because of the environment they grew up in and the values they received early in life. We see a similar picture of activist formation in Salka Sandén's (2007) novel *Deltağanget*. Sandén's protagonist⁶² begins her political journey as a teenager. Starting in Gothenburg, Sandén's activist travels first to Malmö and then to Berlin to take part in different occupations, and in different leftist groups. Eventually, she returns to Gothenburg and helps to start Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) in Sweden, spending much of her time engaged in various battles with police and neo-Nazis. Sandén's character is possessed by a feeling of not belonging to society, of needing to search for meaning, and of the notion of an unjust world. As the quote that opens this chapter demonstrates, Sandén's protagonist argues that while some people are born to belong to society, others are not. It is not an experience or a relation that determines an individual's fate, but birth.

Polletta (1998) notes that "the question of origins is...unanswerable" in the case of most social groups. Nonetheless, we always tell stories in our attempts to construct a coherent narrative surrounding not only the birth of our group, but also the birth of our identities. Sandén's story locates the birth of the extra-parliamentary left in the consequences of capitalist society. As I discussed in Chapter 5, the extra-parliamentary left does originate from various trends within Swedish society. However, rather than suggesting that individual activists arise from similarly social experiences, Sandén locates the origins of extra-parliamentary leftists in birth. In some ways, this is the ultimate expression of what Lichterman

⁶² The book is written in the second person and the main character's name is never revealed.

(2017, p. 37) calls the ‘poetics of social fate’, or the notion that a “position in one or more social hierarchies forges interests.” In reasoning like Sandén’s, individuals are born to become activists because of their social position. In the stories of individual members of the extra-parliamentary left, we can see similar dynamics. Becoming a leftist, or having leftist ideology, is the obvious choice for many of them. It is not something that they had to consider and decide upon, but rather their leftism has its roots in their early childhoods and the environments they grew up in. However, rather than focusing on social positions like class or gender, extra-parliamentary leftists locate their origin stories in values. All of the individuals in this study, with one possible exception, come from families that were working- or middle-class. Similarly, Sandén’s activist comes from a working-class area and family. Yet, these demographic characteristics are not highlighted in the political journeys of extra-parliamentary leftists. Instead, the careers of activists adhere more closely to what Linden and Klandermans (2007) term a revolutionary category. They define this category as a combination of “life histories wherein movement membership and participation are a natural consequence of preceding political socialization” and “testimonies of lifetimes of commitment” (Linden & Klandermans, 2007, p. 185). These journeys even bear some similarity to what Bosi and Della Porta (2012, p. 362) term the ideological path, which is characterized by “the presence of deeply rooted family and/or local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness.”

The major difference between extra-parliamentary leftists and the examples in those two studies regards the lack of alternative paths to participation in the extra-parliamentary left. Linden and Klandermans (2007) identify three other categories of political career in their study of extreme right-wing groups while Bosi and Della Porta (2012) find two other paths into armed groups. The interview data in this study suggests that all individuals adhere to a path that they see as a continuation of their early political socialization. Here, we see some similarity to the individuals involved in Christensen’s (2010) study of Danish anti-fascist activists, where she also finds that individuals tended to group up in leftist-oriented families. Furthermore, the more ethnographic data does not dramatically complicate the idea that there is only one path into the extra-parliamentary left. One of the reasons for this is that I did not see a high turnover in activists throughout my years in the field. While some individuals became less present within the movement, and others became more present, new individuals seldom joined any of the groups of the extra-parliamentary left. When they did, extra-

parliamentary leftists tended to already know them or the new individuals had been politically active in other areas of Sweden, such as Stockholm. When an unknown person did join the extra-parliamentary left, they tended to be young, usually under the age of 20, and enter into one of the more youth-oriented groups such as SUF. In essence, they would have needed to develop a leftist orientation at an earlier point in their life, and if they are still active ten years later, would likely have immensely similar narratives to the ones we see here.

Similarly, while I cannot say with empirical certainty that all extra-parliamentary leftists grew up in leftist environments, I do argue that this understanding dominates the way extra-parliamentary leftists understand the availability of new members or potential recruits. At one afterwork, I asked a participant about this, while discussing issues with recruitment to the extra-parliamentary left. I suggested to her that particularly in terms of specific issues such as rent or employment rights, extra-parliamentary leftists could go door-to-door and attempt to build a campaign. Partly due to my own experiences with political campaigns in the United States and partly out of curiosity around how extra-parliamentary leftists view active recruitment, I was interested to know how she reasoned around this political strategy. However, she immediately responded “*No. We don’t do that. That’s not autonomous politics*” (*Field Notes*), refusing to entertain the idea. Similarly, discussing the recruitment strategies of his former political group, Elias notes that other members of this group looked down on active recruitment:

Colm: Did you have a strategy for recruiting people [in your group]?

Elias: There was no strategy... you looked down on recruiting members, you didn’t want to recruit members just to do it. You weren’t interested in it but looked at it skeptically. One saw it in the same way, you thought it was like what the Trotskyist and Stalinist organizations do, stand outside Systembolaget every Friday and sell newspapers and like they want to recruit people so that they can brainwash them, basically. And one thought that that is what it means to recruit people...

Elias argues that recruitment was understood as brainwashing, rather than as a strategy to grow the extra-parliamentary left. Instead, individuals should acquire leftist views themselves, and then join a leftist organization. Extra-parliamentary leftists are not responsible for convincing others that they should be leftists, but individuals should arrive at this identification themselves. We see further evidence

of this in the few recruitment calls that are made. When groups wish to recruit new members, I have only seen this announced publicly on social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. For example, Support your local feminist (SYLF) posted the following on their Facebook page in March 2019:



In this advertisement, both the language used, and the process presented presume that only individuals who have already developed leftist habits would be interested in joining SYLF. The text immediately identifies three ideological markers (feminist, socialist, and anti-fascist) and goes on to note that the group is part of

building a movement that “dreams” beyond the class society. The call is not directed to individuals who are not already feminists, socialists, and anti-fascists, but rather to individuals who already identify with these labels. Furthermore, SYLF posted this advertisement on their social media. To see the post, you must already be following SYLF on Facebook. This requires that not only have you heard of SYLF but that you have also liked them on Facebook. You must already identify with and support the understandings, goals, and ideas they work towards.

For almost all individuals who have become extra-parliamentary leftists, this happens in the early stages of an individual’s life, where individuals interact with significant others “who are in charge of [an individual’s] socialization” (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, p. 151). Here, it is often parents who play the role of significant others in an individual’s acquisition of leftist habits, with the environment individuals grow up in making it appear ‘natural’ for them to be leftist. However, theoretically, significant others do not have to be parents—they could be anyone else, such as teachers, friends, or other relatives. The prevalence of this lifelong narrative of commitment to leftist ideas is reflected in the recruitment strategies and understandings of groups and individuals in Malmö, where the perceived pool of potential extra-parliamentary leftists is individuals who are already leftists, but who are not organized. Nonetheless, while the development of leftist habits is the first step in the process of becoming an extra-parliamentary leftist, it is important to note that it is a necessary but not sufficient step. Individuals must still become extra-parliamentary leftists, in contrast to other types of leftists. As Maria, who today is active in the Left Party, rather than the extra-parliamentary left, puts it:

It was obvious that I would be leftist...I think I created the identity before I was even like politically conscious, but then when I took the step and became politically active, it wasn't obvious what type of leftist I should be.

7.2 Orbiting the World

Extra-parliamentary leftism is a distinct type of leftism. As I have previously discussed, we can characterize it as anti-capitalist, feminist, socialist and anti-fascist with intellectual roots in autonomous Marxism and with a focus on direct action. Furthermore, the extra-parliamentary left is often the target of soft

repressive measures from Swedish state agencies, as I explored in the previous chapter. Each of these factors contributes to two distinct issues in terms of how individuals encounter the extra-parliamentary left. First, the extra-parliamentary left is a distinct, but not very large movement. There are numerous places in Sweden where the extra-parliamentary left simply does not exist. Individuals in these areas cannot become extra-parliamentary leftists almost by definition. The only possible alternative individuals have in such cases is to join a group in a different city or town where extra-parliamentary organizations exist or to create their own extra-parliamentary group. For example, according to their website, AFA currently has groups in 10 different towns or places⁶³ throughout Sweden. In towns without an existing AFA group, AFA offers the advice to individuals who have found their website that “you can always start your own AFA group” (AFA, 2021). They continue with the following requirements for starting an AFA group: “To start an AFA group, it is required that the group adopts AFA’s platform and organizational bylaws... To start a group, it is required that there are at least three active members. We try to have an even gender balance in the groups” (AFA, 2021). Not only must one individual want to start a group, but they also must have others in their immediate area who also want to start a group. Geography therefore plays an important role in influencing who becomes an extra-parliamentary leftist. Furthermore, finding the movement, even in places like Malmö or Lund, can often be difficult. Nonetheless, clearly, becoming aware of and finding the extra-parliamentary left are necessary steps in becoming an extra-parliamentary leftist.

The second issue revolves around the deviance aspect of joining the extra-parliamentary left. The extra-parliamentary left is delegitimized within the conventional Swedish political arena, and Swedish authorities publish reports describing extra-parliamentary leftists as violence-affirming extremists (see e.g. Kaati, 2018; Lundstedt et al., 2016; Wennerhag & Jämte, 2019). Furthermore, as Jämte and Ellefsen (2020b) detail, Swedish authorities have engaged in a project since 2011 that actively seeks to ‘deradicalize’ young people involved in left-wing extremism. Even other leftist tendencies regard the extra-parliamentary left as deviant. In the previous chapter, I discussed cooperation between VP Malmö and the extra-parliamentary left, noting that while this cooperation usually proceeds

⁶³ These are: Malmö, Lund, Helsingborg, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Uppsala, Jönköping, Norrbotten, Fyrbodalen, and Gävle.

smoothly, extra-parliamentary leftists can regard members of VP as naïve or deceitful. However, at the national level, VP consistently attempts to distance itself and stigmatize the extra-parliamentary left. For example, Malin Björk, an EU representative for VP, states that AFA “is not an organization we support” and Jonas Sjöstedt, the former party leader, remarked similarly that AFA’s message “is not a message we want, that’s obvious” (Karlsson & Svensson, 2019)⁶⁴. As I noted in the previous chapter, one major consequence of this stigmatization is that individuals seldom identify as extra-parliamentary leftists outside of extra-parliamentary events. It is difficult for individuals outside the movement to know who they should talk to or how they should join. Similarly, as deviant ideas, the understandings of the extra-parliamentary left are not encountered in everyday life in Swedish society. Individuals must therefore somehow come into contact with these ideas, groups, and individuals prior to having the opportunity to join the extra-parliamentary left.

In his discussion of how individuals enter and join social worlds, Strauss (1978) identifies something he calls *orbiting processes*. He suggests that “most social world and subworld entries involve *orbiting processes* i.e., moving from one [social world] to another, retaining both or dropping the original, plus simultaneous memberships” (Strauss, 1978, p. 124, emphasis original). Strauss argues here that individuals who are involved with a related or connected social world are more likely to join and identify with a given social world. Joining a new group does not happen in a vacuum, it is connected to previous experiences. Or as James (1907/1997b) notes, new habits always arise from and are connected to an individual’s previous habits. The social world of the extra-parliamentary has several orbiting social worlds. For example, if we discuss the social world of the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö today, the social world of the Left Party is connected and related. For the individuals in this study, participation in orbiting social worlds was the way that they found the extra-parliamentary left. For some individuals, it was initially participation in subcultural activities that led them to the extra-parliamentary left, while for others they first participated in the youth groups of institutional political parties. In both cases, however, it was through

⁶⁴ These comments came in response to the publication of a picture of Jonas Sjöstedt with several party supporters in the Left Party’s election campaign materials for the EU-election in 2019. In the picture, one of the individuals has a t-shirt bearing the name of Anti-Fascist Action. See Karlsson (2019) for the picture, and more information.

participation in these activities that they encountered extra-parliamentary leftist ideas, activities, and identities.

I refer to these two separate paths into the extra-parliamentary left here as the *subcultural path* and the *institutional path*. In the subcultural path, individuals describe their journey into an extra-parliamentary leftist group through an initial interest in art, music, books, or other traditionally subcultural activities and interests. Conversely, in the institutional path, individuals encounter the extra-parliamentary left as part of their involvement with groups like The Young Left (UV) or The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League (SSU). I analyze these two categories together here, in order to highlight the similarities implied and apparent in these different paths, which both emphasize the importance of relations and interactions in stories of initial involvement in the extra-parliamentary left.

I begin with the subcultural path. Emil, who I introduced above, exemplifies this path. When I asked him about how he became an extra-parliamentary leftist, he answered like this:

Emil: ...The reason I became an extra-parliamentary leftist was, partly it was that we moved from a big city to a small town, and when I went in school there, I met Nazis basically who were a physical threat, and that meant that I was more attracted to militant methods. But it was also a little teenage rebellion I did, in a really young age, I started to listen to punk, to bands who were anarchists so that attracted me, I was really early fascinated by the really subcultural and the aesthetic, more than the politics really...

Colm: Interesting! You mentioned your family earlier, how was it with your friends, were they also political?

Emil: Yea, absolutely. Or I looked for others who stuck out in this pretty conformative small town, so everyone who had different clothes or a different lifestyle, you became friends basically. So that was also a part of it. Everyone who skated or was a punk or painted graffiti, or whatever it was, you became a group because you stuck out a bit, and we were harassed.

Emil, like others who follow the subcultural path, begins pursuing what Prus and Grills (2003) refer to as *intrigues*. They define intrigues as a term that “acknowledges the attractions, enjoyments, allures, fascinations, or mystiques that people may associate with particular involvements” (Prus & Grills, 2003, p. 108). In Emil’s case, he suggests that he was ‘fascinated’ by the aesthetic of the extra-

parliamentary left and began to listen to music that was associated with anarchists and even produced by them. The connection between social movements and music is well-known (Eyerman, 2002, 2007; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998). Possessing taken-for-granted leftist habits, as I discussed above, Emil starts to seek out what he sees as a more subcultural form of leftism. It is in his participation in these subcultural environments that Emil starts to develop extra-parliamentary leftist ideas, and particularly through his participation in conflicts with Nazis. As he says in discussing his initial political journey into the extra-parliamentary left further:

...it was mostly the subcultural dimension, but also the experience of having your physical environment limited and that adults didn't really care about it and when I was even smaller, one grew up in a time when there were lots of Nazis in the city and considering my mom was from Southeast Asia and my grandmother was from Norway and her brother was active in the resistance movement during World War II so I had a very early militant view of anti-fascism so that was the step like I said.

Emil emphasizes the importance of the physical environment here, and the experience of having his physical environment limited. Above, he suggested that subcultural individuals were harassed in his town, and here he expands on that to argue that Nazis were a part of that harassment. It is these experiences with Nazis that he argues shapes his view on militant anti-fascism, in addition to his family history. Many of the individuals in the subcultural path tell a similar story. Having grown up in a leftist environment, they are initially attracted to anarchism or other types of extra-parliamentary leftism through music. In these subcultural environments, they often encountered Nazis who limited their ability to either be present in the physical environment of their town or limited their ability to enjoy the music scene. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Nazism, and different types of Nazi movements were very present in Sweden throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and Sweden was "one of the world leaders in the production of white power music" at this time (Eyerman, 2002, p. 451). Individuals engaged in subcultural activities often encountered these movements even prior to joining the extra-parliamentary left. For example, Daniel, a man in his late 20s from southern Sweden who has been active in the extra-parliamentary left for about 10 years, describes his early experiences with Nazis like this:

Colm: You mentioned how you went to demonstrations against the Nazis in Helsingborg, were they also present in your [hometown]?

Daniel: Yea, definitely. I think they were influenced by all these campaigns in Helsingborg. And then one of the people who became one of leading Nazis in my hometown went to the same afterschool places as me, so we have talked to each other and I was friends with his stepbrother, so they were present in that weird way. When me and my friends started to become [extra-parliamentary] leftist because, we were a small group of like outsiders, who were a bit subcultural and then you come in contact with [extra-parliamentary] leftist ideas through that, and you thought you were oppressed because you smoked weed and so on (laughs), but in any case, someone joined UV and then we started to get shit from the Nazis. I ended up in a bunch of shit, I had big, weird hair and that type of thing, and the Nazis were really provoked by that, so I was assaulted twice. It wasn't so bad, but the real problem was that you went around and were scared, that was their biggest influence. We had to hide ourselves sometime.

Colm: Did you get any support from organizations or anything when that happened?

Daniel: Ah, UV, it was nice, they came out from Helsingborg to support us with the Nazi problem we had. They came out and talked a bit, I don't remember what we talked about, but like they went around and gave out flyers...

Like Emil, Daniel experiences Nazis limiting his physical environment, and notes that they twice assaulted him in his hometown. Although he describes himself as initially attracted to subcultural experiences, he notes that it was in these experiences that he first encountered extra-parliamentary leftist ideas. Amongst individuals on the subcultural path, punk was one of the most common subcultures that they participated in. Describing the punk environment in Sweden, Hannerz (2015, p. 187) notes that punks could “have extensive discussions on politics” and be “involved in political groups—such as Anti-Fascist Action, Anarchist Black Cross, Animal Liberation Front, and No One is Illegal.” Although Hannerz suggests that this type of political participation was seldom in focus in the punk scene, individuals in these environments would nonetheless unavoidably encounter extra-parliamentary ideas, symbols, and individuals. Notably, however, while the participants in this study suggest that they first came into contact with extra-parliamentary ideas through subcultures, no participant

views participating in a subculture as a political act. Rather, the subculture merely introduced the political ideas to the participants.

At the same time, in these subculture environments or in relation to their subcultural participation, participants confronted Nazis, who attempted to limit their physical mobility and with whom they had violent conflicts. As Emil highlights, these individuals often then adopted a militant approach to anti-fascism, where violence was legitimate. This happens even prior to individuals joining an extra-parliamentary leftist group. Yet, as I discuss further in the next chapter, a willingness to engage in violent anti-fascism is one of the most important authentication markers for extra-parliamentary leftists. Here, I argue that many individuals in the subcultural path actually possessed this understanding prior to entering into the extra-parliamentary left. Returning to the question of stigmatization and deviance raised above, I suggest that this understanding of violence is not initially politically motivated for these participants. It is instead a result of interactions with Nazis in what we can call the subcultural arena. Individuals experience harassment and assault due to what they view as their subcultural or demographic characteristics and feel that Nazis attempt to limit their ability to act in either society or a subcultural group. As part of this process, violent conflicts occur, leaving some individuals with a militant view of anti-fascism. The understanding arises, however, only out of interactions within the subcultural arena, and it is only in subcultural participation that these views develop (Becker, 1953).

However, this does not need to be the case within the subcultural path. It is a process that can occur but depends on an individual's location and experiences (fairly obviously, Nazis would need to be present in the actual physical environment for this to happen). Nonetheless, subcultural participation is one common manner of finding the extra-parliamentary left. The second common path to the extra-parliamentary left is the institutional path. Elsa exemplifies this path. Elsa is in her early 30s and grew up in southern Sweden. At the time of our interview, she had been active in an extra-parliamentary group for a little over two years, after having taken a pause from political activism for a few years. She first became politically active in high school and was active until her late 20s prior to her pause. She describes her initial political experiences like this:

...I started to be politically active when I was in high school, my parents have always been leftist, always voted for the Left Party, so I have always been also, so I started to read all the feminist books and stuff in middle school but then when I

went to high school I joined UV, the youth party of the Left Party, and the town I come from is very, very bourgeois, really a lot of Moderates, so we weren't so many and we were pretty far from Malmö and Lund so no one really kept an eye on us so we worked together all the time with the extra-parliamentary left in Helsingborg, which probably wasn't entirely approved (laughs)...

Elsa's journey highlights again the importance of geography. She notes that while the extra-parliamentary left existed in Helsingborg, her town had only the Young Left. Furthermore, she states that there were not many others involved as the town she comes from was very bourgeois. Although she suggests, similar to above, that she has 'always been' a leftist, her options for leftist political engagement were limited. For the individuals who follow the institutional path, this is a common account of their participation. In their retellings, they joined UV or SSU because it was the only leftist group in their areas. There are simply more branches of UV and SSU throughout Sweden than there are extra-parliamentary left groups or environments. Above, I noted that AFA has ten branches throughout Sweden. Conversely, just in Skåne, UV has eight separate groups (Ung Vänster Skåne, 2021). However, through participation in UV, Elsa begins to encounter and work together with extra-parliamentary groups and individuals. Magnus discusses a similar experience of engagement in an institutional political group leading to contact with the extra-parliamentary left. Magnus is a man in his mid-30s from who has been active in the extra-parliamentary left for over 15 years. He first became politically active when he started studying at university and chose to join a leftist student organization.

Colm: How did you decide to join [leftist student organization]?

Magnus: I had read philosophy for a long time, I think I was a depressed teenager who like read existentialism and then I stopped being that and started to find leftist politics and Marxism. And for me, it's always been obvious to get engaged, it took a long time for me to understand that that is not the case for other people. For me it's completely absurd to go around and think a bunch of things and not act on it. I think it's completely paradoxical. And so when I sat and read Marx and Lenin and all of them, I realized that I had to organize myself. And then I chose [group name] since I was student...but we were two factions in [group name] and eventually we had a big split. Parts of our organization were really connected to the Left Party while me, my current partner, and some others were much more interested in direct action, for me it's obvious, if you read socialist ideology. A lot

of these others read the same books, and ideologically, they believe in direct action, crushing the state, all that good stuff but then they do absolutely nothing. Because they mean that would sabotage things for the Left Party...

Magnus goes further than Elsa, arguing that ideologically he has always been aligned with the extra-parliamentary left, even when he was organized in this student organization. However, it is the university environment, and his experiences with others in his group that connects him to the extra-parliamentary left. He notes that he began to hang out at an extra-parliamentary space with a few others from his organization and that they there *'met many people who were in SUF and other autonomous groups and started to do things.'* Just as some of the individuals on the subcultural path were militant anti-fascists prior to involvement with the extra-parliamentary left, Magnus argues that he (and some of his fellow group members) already believed in direct action and *'crushing the state'* prior to joining the extra-parliamentary left. However, he did not find the extra-parliamentary left until his political participation brought him into contact with others with similar ideas and until he met individuals who were organized within extra-parliamentary groups like SUF. Involvement in institutional political groups like UV or SSU can lead to these encounters and interactions, as these social worlds orbit the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Participation in other forms of leftist politics is therefore the second common way individuals find the extra-parliamentary left, either through formal cooperation or through informal contacts.

In both the interview data and the ethnographic data, I would suggest that the institutional path is the more common path into the extra-parliamentary left. Furthermore, even individuals who mostly follow the subcultural path, or where it dominates in their accounts of their early participation, often have some experience with institutional leftist organizations. Ella even goes so far as to say, *'my Marxist schooling, I got that from VP even though I've never been in it, we have to give them credit for schooling basically our whole movement, it's SSU and VP that have given the autonomous left its political schooling.'* Experience with an institutional political group is very common, particularly in the early stages of an individual's political participation. However, it is impossible for me to know the generalizability of this phenomenon. Clearly, other ways of encountering the extra-parliamentary left could exist, such as through the internet or through family. Nevertheless, individuals do not join the extra-parliamentary left from nowhere, but rather often first pass through an orbiting social world.

While the institutional path may be more common amongst the participants in this study, I argue that it is the subcultural path that dominates ideas about recruitment and notions of how individuals find the extra-parliamentary left. A recurring theme in discussions in the field was that the extra-parliamentary left had struggled with recruitment over the previous ten years. Participants suggested further that very few young people were joining the movement. In the above accounts, all of the participants are in their teens when they become active in the extra-parliamentary left. Conversely, if we return to the brännboll tournament I discussed in the opening chapter, almost all the participants were over the age of 25. Similar to the first of May celebration described in the previous chapter, there were almost no distinctive subcultural markers present at the brännboll tournament and it felt more like a neighborhood party. Children ran around in the grass and onto the field, AFA sold hot dogs and beer, and it took place in the open with a jovial, familiar atmosphere.

Participants reflect on difficulties with recruitment and the lack of young people in several ways, but the most common and prominent involves decrying the demise of the subcultural path. One participant remarked to me that the reason no 15-year-olds join the extra-parliamentary left anymore is that the extra-parliamentary left has become too much of a political movement and has stopped being a subculture. For this individual, this means that ‘*nobody comes to our parties anymore*’ (*Field notes*). Signe argued similarly when I asked her about this issue.

Colm: One recurring theme in my interviews is that as you say, there aren’t so many new people who join. Why do you think this is?

Signe: ...I think, this maybe is a bit wild, but we used to be a bit of a subculture also, and there are different trends in society, and maybe now it’s just not a trend amongst young people to be political...when there’s a big environment its basically an advertisement for itself because there are parties and people do things.

In her analysis of the recruitment issues of the extra-parliamentary left, Signe extends the problems to society, arguing that the problem is that politics is not cool or trendy anymore. Similarly, because there are no parties, individuals are not aware of the existence of the extra-parliamentary left. The emphasis here revolves around the extra-parliamentary left as found and accessed through subcultural activities and environments, rather than any questions about ideology, politics, or institutional groups. Age similarly plays an important role in these

analyses. Potential members of the extra-parliamentary left are not older individuals, but instead individuals under or around the age of 20. This understanding creates further problems for an aging community. One informant in his 30s, discussing this difficulty, remarked in a frustrated manner to me at an afterwork ‘*How the fuck should I know what 15-year-olds think is cool?*’ (Field notes). Young people join the extra-parliamentary left, in this thinking, because of the intrigues associated with its subcultural features. As those subcultural features become either less prominent or less cool, individuals stop finding the extra-parliamentary left. In a politics of community, it is the distinctive and recognizable aspects of a group that are thought to create change in both individuals and society. Here, we see that as the societal context has changed, individuals argue that the distinctive attractiveness of the group has weakened.

Jämte et al. (2020, pp. 24, 22) argue that the extra-parliamentary left bases its current frame on “a more encompassing political subject” than previous frames, and that the extra-parliamentary now uses “organization-level collaboration with actors outside the movement as the preferred course of action.” Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015, p. 722) similarly suggest that extra-parliamentary left has shifted from closed to open communities, “allowing activists to form new alliances.” As I noted in the previous chapter, cooperation with VP is not uncommon in the extra-parliamentary left. Nonetheless, I would argue that despite these changes in collaborations, the idea of who a potential extra-parliamentary leftist is has not changed. Potential new members are young, subcultural individuals who are attracted to the intrigues of the extra-parliamentary left and who find the community through parties or other similar activities.

After the development of leftist habits, individuals still need to find the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Individuals tend to find this social world through involvement in connected or neighboring social worlds. These social worlds tend to fall into two categories, as either subcultural or institutional. For participants who follow the subcultural path, they encounter the ideas of the extra-parliamentary left through participation in subcultural activities. Some of these participants even encounter Nazis in their subcultural involvement and develop an understanding of militant anti-fascism even prior to joining the extra-parliamentary left. Others follow the institutional path, finding the extra-parliamentary left through their engagement in institutional political organizations, like UV or SSU. While I would suggest that the institutional path is more common amongst this study’s participants, ideas about recruitment in the

extra-parliamentary left today are dominated by the subcultural path. Extra-parliamentary leftists argue that both the aging community and general societal trends limit the number of new members who join the community. Yet, even if these individuals find the extra-parliamentary left, one potential step remains. They must then decide to join an extra-parliamentary group.

7.3 Achieving Membership

Despite naturally viewing the world with leftist habits and encountering the extra-parliamentary left, individuals do not necessarily choose to become members of the extra-parliamentary left. This is particularly the case in Malmö. For example, Anton, a man in his 30s who is active in the Left Party, suggests that generally in Sweden individuals are *'either an anarchist or a parliamentary socialist.'* However, he argues that in Malmö *'it's not weird to get involved in the Left Party even though you don't believe in the parliamentary system. It sounds like a paradox, but it's not in Malmö.'* As individuals engage politically, they can decide to join the Left Party, decide to join other political groups, or decide to not join a political group and merely participate in demonstrations or other political actions. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify as an extra-parliamentary leftist without participating in at least some of the activities of the extra-parliamentary left. Yet, this does not mean that all individuals who identify as extra-parliamentary leftists are members of an extra-parliamentary group. Here, Unruh's (1979, 1980) distinction between regulars and insiders in terms of social world participation is useful. In this context, regulars are individuals who identify as extra-parliamentary leftists, participate in some extra-parliamentary leftist activities, and have "a certain degree of commitment to the continuation" of the extra-parliamentary left's way of life, but who are not members of a specific extra-parliamentary group (Unruh, 1979, p. 120). Conversely, insiders are members of an extra-parliamentary group who "focus on creating and sustaining activities for other participants, recruiting new actors, and [have] intimate knowledge of social world activities" (Unruh, 1980, p. 282). The question that arises is why some individuals become insiders, whereas others remain regulars. I argue that individuals become regulars on the basis of moral tension (Lofland & Stark, 1965), intrigues, and social ties (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). In combination, these three factors strongly contribute to an individual's

decision to join an extra-parliamentary group, rather than remain merely participants in extra-parliamentary activities.

Stina's journey into the extra-parliamentary left exemplifies each of these three factors. Stina began her political journey on the institutional path discussed above, initially joining SSU when she was 15 years old. She describes her experiences in SSU like this:

Colm: Can you describe your time in SSU a bit?

Stina: I was in SSU for three years, and SSU [town] is a pretty special SSU group, most of the people who were there, there were quite a few who had come from UV, I think most of them and UV had either stopped existing or wasn't so good, so they joined SSU instead. So there weren't so many who were actually social democrats, people were way more leftist...

Stina suggests that her SSU group was not a typical SSU group, but instead far more leftist than social democratic. At least in the beginning, she argues that the other members of her group were more leftist than her, and that as she participated in SSU activities, *'they dragged me to the left the whole time, a bit at a time.'* In this process, she states that she started to become 'disillusioned' with the parliamentary system. This disillusionment was also a result of interactions between her SSU group and the mother party, SAP. She says:

Colm: Did you often have contact with the mother party?

Stina: ...I remember one of the things that was really dumb at the end was that one of the adult social democrats who worked at the party office, wrote racist things on the official party blog and we told the mother party, and all they did was say to him, you have to stop writing racist things on the blog. They didn't say you can't blog anymore, they didn't say you lose your position, they said nothing, there were no consequences more than that they said, stop writing racist things on your blog...

Colm: Why did you leave SSU in the end?

Stina: ...in time everyone I was organized with left SSU to join SUF, and then it was pretty natural for me when everyone I was organized with joined SUF to do it too...it's how it is, you're young and you think what you think and then you look at what they think and say and then you think that's what I think too so you join,

and then when you're in it, and see how dull it is, how they only do things that mean nothing, and you get disillusioned. And tired. ...They were bad. They did nothing. And the extra-parliamentary left was much more exciting...

In Stina's explanation of her decision to join the extra-parliamentary left, we see all three of the factors discussed above. First, she experiences a tension between what she thinks a political group should do and what she experienced SSU and SAP as actually doing. She describes how there were no consequences for racist statements and argues that 'they only do things that mean nothing.' This is an example of moral tension. Lofland and Stark (1965, p. 128), in a study of converts to a religious cult, argue that necessary precondition for conversion to a deviant reality is "a felt discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which these people saw themselves caught up", which they call moral tension. Stina, here, experiences this discrepancy in SSU, noting that SSU did not do or think what she imagined they would do. She further identifies the other members of her group as pulling her leftwards, and notes that most of them eventually joined the extra-parliamentary left, rather than remaining in SSU. It is in these interactions and relations that Stina learns to be more leftist, with these friends and other group members serving as significant others in her secondary political socialization. Again, Stina does not develop her political views herself, but rather it is only through interaction that she begins to identify herself as extra-parliamentary leftist, rather than social democratic. She further notes that when these other individuals had joined SUF, it became 'natural' for her to join SUF as well. Within the social movement literature, the weight of social ties in influencing an individual's decisions about participation is well-established (see e.g. Diani, 2000; Heaney & Rojas, 2014; Kitts, 2000; Krinsky & Crossley, 2014; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). It is therefore unsurprising that social ties appear to play a strong role in deciding to join an extra-parliamentary group.

Stina, however, also emphasizes that the extra-parliamentary left seemed 'much more exciting' than parliamentary politics. In the descriptions of the participants' impressions of the extra-parliamentary left prior to their decision to join, words like exciting, cool, fun, or radical consistently reappear. These impressions and understandings of the extra-parliamentary left as different or distinctive from parliamentary politics appear to play a crucial role in the participants' decision to engage in a group. We see, for example, Freja highlight that she regarded party politics as boring in contrast to extra-parliamentary politics in the following quote:

Colm: You said that when you moved to Malmö, you decided that you didn't want to be in UV anymore, I wonder if you can expand on that?

Freja: I felt like I wasn't really interested in party politics, but maybe more union or extra-parliamentary politics then. And, I was 19, it feels a bit boring with party politics, I might think a bit different today, but then I felt like I wanted to destroy the whole fucking system (laughs)...

Rasmus similarly highlights how he experienced UV as boring in contrast to the fun activities of the extra-parliamentary left:

Colm: But if we talk about your town a bit, was there any political movement there other than the Nazis?

Rasmus: No there was nothing, or the Left Party was there, and I was in UV for a period, but it didn't feel giving, it wasn't fun more than anything, so then I was politically active in Gothenburg, which was really close, it was much more fun to be in SUF, and arrange Reclaims and go to anti-fascist gatherings and stuff...

In these descriptions, parliamentary politics is consistently categorized as boring, consisting of activities that are not fun or giving, while extra-parliamentary politics involves exciting, cool, and fun events and is a type of politics where you do things. There appear to be two major features of extra-parliamentary politics that attract the participants, and that make extra-parliamentary politics different. First, part of its distinctiveness lies in the use of direct action. Rasmus, for example, specifically names the role of 'reclaims.' Reclaims⁶⁵ were street parties where activists played music and occupied space on city streets, and were part-demonstration, part-party, as an attempt to unite "political action with a carnival-like atmosphere" (Stahre, 2010, p. 8). In the stories of many participants, reclaims or other public demonstrations reappear as events that initially attracted them to the extra-parliamentary left. They are seen as a demonstration of something different, and of a different type of politics to the mundane activities of parliamentary politics. Second, extra-parliamentary politics was seen as exciting rather than boring to the participants because it was freer and more radical, while parliamentary groups were experienced as hierarchical, and often described as

⁶⁵ See Stahre (2010) for a longer description of reclaims in Sweden, and for a discussion of their historical development and political use.

Leninist or Stalinist. Arvid, for example, describes his decision to join the extra-parliamentary left like this:

Colm: How did you chose the extra-parliamentary left?

Arvid: I think it was that it was radical, in some way anarchist, communist, socialist, something in that direction, and that all the statements were done based on the radical extra-parliamentary idea, and that it was an anti-Stalinist tradition in some way which wasn't connected to the different state socialist projects, there wasn't any connection to anything that had become a part of capitalism instead of being anti-capitalist for real.

For Arvid, the extra-parliamentary left did not have the historical baggage of other leftist movements, which 'had become a part of capitalism'. Rather, the extra-parliamentary left remained truly radical to Arvid, or truly different from the surrounding society. He further highlights that he saw it as an anti-Stalinist tradition. Accusations of Stalinism abound when extra-parliamentary leftists describe other political groups. I return to this issue in the next chapter, but here it is important to note that Stalinism in this context means hierarchical and non-democratic. Nils, for example, used the word Stalinist to describe the UV group he was in. He describes the group's structure like this:

Colm: How did you experience being in UV?

Nils: It was pretty hierarchical, because there was one guy⁶⁶ ...He joined, he was active there, he was the leader there, and it was very much that we did what he said. So there was a lot of internal hegemony, it wasn't super ideological, there weren't a lot of study circles or anything like that...

Nils emphasizes that within his UV group, the other members mostly followed the decision of the leader. I argue here that we must take the activities of the extra-parliamentary left seriously in understanding its allure to individuals who become extra-parliamentary leftists. It is not solely the subcultural aspects of parties, music, or style that attract individuals to the extra-parliamentary left, but also the ideology and political practice of extra-parliamentary groups. Nils and Arvid both

⁶⁶ Nils, at this point, discusses this individual who went on to have a career within the leftist media environment. He appears to have wanted to emphasize that he was not only a leader in his UV group, but that he also became a leader in the Swedish institutional left.

move away from parliamentary politics as they experience it as hierarchical, viewing the extra-parliamentary left as a more radical and non-hierarchical place. Above, Magnus noted that he interpreted the books he read as demanding direct action, but that his parliamentary group did not engage in this type of politics. It is here we see how moral tensions and intrigues bleed into each other. In each case, after finding and becoming aware of the extra-parliamentary left, individuals develop an ideology and an idea of how politics should be done. Part of these ideas involves a belief in direct action, which is felt to attack the systems of power in society. Individuals view themselves as revolutionaries, rather than reformists, to return to the language of the previous chapter. Individuals then experience institutional political groups as failing to adhere to this ideology or as insufficiently ideological, whether it is in questions surrounding racism, decision making, or more conventional political action. The extra-parliamentary left, conversely, becomes intriguing or alluring because individuals see the actions of the extra-parliamentary left as attacking the system, and demonstrating the existence of an alternative that appears to adhere more closely to their ideas about politics. Yet, defining situations in this way, and assigning these meanings to actions, can only happen after individuals begin to interact with extra-parliamentary leftists. It is in these interactions, at parties, bars, demonstrations, or within their political groups, that individuals learn the specific habits of the extra-parliamentary left. One means, then, of resolving moral tension is to join the intriguing extra-parliamentary left.

The social movement literature would suggest that we should not downplay the role of social ties in eventually joining an extra-parliamentary leftist group. While I agree that these ties play a vital role in the decision to join the group, I would suggest that these ties also allow individuals to develop, take on, and maintain the meanings and ideology of the extra-parliamentary leftist community. It is in Stina's interaction with more radical SSU members, and eventual extra-parliamentary leftists, for example, that she develops a more leftist ideology. Similarly, Magnus encounters extra-parliamentary leftists and through sustained interaction with them develops his political understandings. Rasmus sees extra-parliamentary leftists involved in reclaims, and wishes to join in. It is in these interactions that the extra-parliamentary left becomes cool, which in combination with a developing moral tension, eventually leads to a decision to join a group.

Even if social ties play an important role in the decisions of individuals to join the extra-parliamentary left, I argue that in current recruitment processes, it is the

distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left that individuals see as the most important factor in convincing others to join. For example, during the International Women's Day demonstration in 2019, I had the following conversation with Pontus:

After Erika left, I spent much of the rest of the demonstration walking alongside Pontus. We had a long discussion about what types of protest should be done on these "holidays". He was advocating for a different form of protest. He argued that this type of walking demonstration is pointless and achieves nothing. He wanted instead to have more of a day of action, where extra-parliamentary leftists occupied buildings or performed actions in smaller groups. He argued that the community would receive more publicity, and that it would be easier to show people on the fence that they do things. He noted that one way to recruit more people is when issues become very relevant. One way to make issues more relevant would then be to perform more actions that make it so. He also discussed how if there is to be a march, it should be done in a more 'fascist' style. With uniforms, walking in lines, and looking more militant generally. He thought this type of very loose, unorganized march did not help to recruit individuals. He noted that the extra-parliamentary left should work to reclaim things from the Nazis, not letting them have anything. He used the example of a bomber jacket, which he said was a right-wing item when people started wearing them again a few years ago. He noted that the left had taken it back from the Nazis. He said they should do the same for everything "they" had.

(Field notes)

Here, there is an interesting relation between what Pontus advocates and what I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. While extra-parliamentary leftists should not attempt to recruit or convince people to join the community through door-knocking or 'brainwashing', the actions of the community should create in others a feeling that something is important. It is the actions of the community, rather than the actions of individuals extra-parliamentary leftists that should convince others to join. It is in these actions that the extra-parliamentary left becomes cool, exciting, or distinctive to others, rather than through other recruitment strategies. While the community can force issues to become relevant, individuals cannot. We find a similar understanding in *Brev från ett cell* (Letter From a Cell) by Henrik Johansson (2019). Johansson's novel follows the adventures of the protagonist, Patrik Panik, as he returns from Spain to find

himself in the midst of a reclaim the streets demonstration around 2000. Panik experiences how the police refuse to allow the demonstration to move along the streets of Malmö and eventually even attack the demonstrators. Panik watches as a young girl suffers an eye injury from a police baton and becomes incensed. He begins to swing at the police with a flag, watching as his blows glance off the helmets of the riot police, while those around fall and run away. This event begins his journey into the extra-parliamentary left.

Panik's decision to become an extra-parliamentary leftist occurs at an action representing the community, and where he has the chance to experience for himself the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left. It is not individuals who convince him to join the community, but instead, it is the actions of the community that create a feeling that something is important for him, and that another type of politics exists. Within the extra-parliamentary left, one common slogan is 'another world is possible.' In both the conversation with Pontus, Johansson's novel, and the interviews above, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that the role of community actions is to demonstrate that another world truly is possible to potential members of the extra-parliamentary left, and the surrounding society. Pontus argues that the extra-parliamentary left should demonstrate that an anti-capitalist world is possible. Johansson's character finds a world where the police fear citizens, rather than his common interactions with the police, where he constantly experiences a feeling of powerlessness. The interview participants find a world where a different type of politics, both anti-capitalist and anti-hierarchical, appears demonstrated to be possible. Extra-parliamentary leftists, then, are not responsible for convincing others of the correctness of the extra-parliamentary left's political analysis, but instead for maintaining the distinctiveness and recognizability of extra-parliamentary habits. It is this that causes change in society and convinces other individuals.

7.4 Commitment and Community

While individuals may make the decision to join an extra-parliamentary leftist group, this does not necessarily mean that they remain within the extra-parliamentary left or remain committed to an extra-parliamentary leftist identity. Some individuals may only be active within a group for a few weeks, a few months, or a few years. However, others remain active for extremely long periods of time,

from 10 to 20 years, joining the extra-parliamentary left as a teenager and remaining within the community into their 30s. In this section, I explore this commitment, and examine why individuals remain within this community, devoting their time and energy to creating and maintaining the activities of the extra-parliamentary left.

Most individuals, such as Emil or Stina above, begin their careers (Becker, 1963/1997; Strauss, 1978) in this social world in the Swedish Anarcho-Syndicalist Youth Federation (SUF). Speaking about SUF, Staffan, who is active in SAC today, puts it this way:

Colm: How do you see the relation between SUF and SAC?

Staffan: SUF is basically the whole autonomous left's youth organization. SAC has money, basically...sometimes I can think SAC is too subcultural, when it's just people who want to be in an anarchist organization, it relates to the SUF thing. Kids have to be allowed to do what they want, it sometimes raises people to be good union people, or sometimes they join AFA, so even if I can be frustrated that people treat SAC as their anarchist hobby, I think SUF is really important. Usually, you're studying and working at some shit job, it's a way in, that's what it's about basically.

Staffan argues here that SUF is the youth organization for the entire extra-parliamentary left, in the manner that UV or SSU are for institutional political parties. However, Staffan highlights that he can sometime become frustrated with the 'subcultural' aspects of SAC, which he relates to SUF. Subcultural should be understood here as people who are more interested in creating an identity, then in the political practice and goals of the extra-parliamentary left. Ye, he also emphasizes that he thinks 'kids' should be allowed to do what they want, the practices and activities of SUF should not be controlled by older extra-parliamentary leftists or members of SAC. Rather, it is up to the SUF members to decide what they want to do. Sara, who is in her early 30s and has been active in the extra-parliamentary left for over 15 years, beginning in SUF, states similar thoughts when discussing the relation between older and younger extra-parliamentary leftists:

Colm: I'm wondering, if we go back to power, we have talked about gender, but can we talk about age as well? Or how do you balance a group when you have 18-year-olds and 30-year-olds organized in the same group?

Sara: I think it's difficult. Because when I was 18, 19, 20, I was probably also here for the identity and because it was dope, it was a really cool environment, and I mean, you got to be someone. Now, I'm really secure in that I'm a leftist, I'm really secure in my background, but that's also because I have so much experience in this environment. In my position now, I can think, but we don't need to do these things, like creating cool things and identity and whatever, but I still think that for many young people, they have a need for it, you have to find yourself when you're 22...I also grew up in the old association Sweden. I'm in the last generation that did, young people maybe have other needs today, I want to school them like I was schooled, because I think it's really sound, but they maybe don't want that, they might want something else. We need to let them take space...I think that when you're 18 or 30 you have different needs for the group. When you're 18 you want to find a home. When you're 30, you've found a home where you like the practices.

Sara suggests that younger and older extra-parliamentary leftists have different 'needs.' She contends that teenagers are searching for a home, while the older activists have found a home. Sara, today, feels at home in the extra-parliamentary left and experiences the environment as comfortable and secure. However, she contrasts this with her younger self, where she argues that she needed to create the identity of an extra-parliamentary leftist and learn the practices associated with this environment. Like Staffan, Sara also emphasizes that it is important that older activists do not control younger activists. Individuals should be allowed to find themselves through whatever activities they want to create in the extra-parliamentary left. Here, Sara also provides a nuanced analysis of changes in Swedish society, discussing the fading of the 'old association Sweden.' As I noted in the previous chapter, the social democratic hegemony in Sweden has begun to fade. The activities and practices of the extra-parliamentary left which Sara learned when she was younger are inherently connected to this old society. As she points out, these practices may not make younger individuals feel at home, due to their lack of familiarity. For her, however, these are the practices she likes.

Studying the extra-parliamentary left as a person who did not grow up in Sweden, the similarities between the activities of the extra-parliamentary left and those of other organizations in Sweden has always stood out. For example, meetings in the extra-parliamentary left have an almost exactly similar form to any meetings at Swedish universities. There is an agenda, a person who leads the meeting, a person who takes notes, and afterwards these notes are made available to all group members. Discussing the establishment of AFA in the early 1990s, one of Jämtne's (2013) informants argues that activists brought an organizational

culture from the institutional Swedish world with them. One interviewed activist says:

We brought our organizational culture with us...We are more like, 'yea, who's going to be the meeting facilitator, who's going to fix the agenda. We write protocols, now we do this, now we are going to make a decision—have you done what you said you would do at the last meeting?' It was something completely different [from previously], the more traditional folk movement model we established there.

(Jämte, 2013, p. 295)

Although the extra-parliamentary left may act differently from other Swedish political groups at times, it remains a community inherently connected to the broader Swedish society and Swedish political culture. Again, here, we see that the habits of the extra-parliamentary left grow out of past experiences with other political groups. It is in SUF that these activities are recreated into extra-parliamentary habits, rather than parliamentary or institutional habits. SUF socializes individuals into the extra-parliamentary left, as a form of secondary socialization. For example, on their website, SUF (2021) writes that “being in SUF means being an activist. In turn, this means that one acts to change society.” SUF then lists what they suggest are four common forms of activism: posterings, demonstrations, merchandise tables, and giving out flyers. Under each form of activism, they provide tips and advice about what individuals should consider when, for example, arranging a demonstration, such as how to specify a theme and how to spread information about the demonstration. Although SUF was not the most active extra-parliamentary group in Malmö during my time in the field, it was nonetheless these four activities that were the most common forms of activism amongst the participants and groups I followed. Furthermore, SUF places the responsibilities on individuals to create these activities rather than organizations. Just as Staffan and Sara discuss above, participants in the extra-parliamentary left are responsible for creating and carrying out these activities themselves, in the manner that they wish to. In this sense, each member has a responsibility for ensuring the survival of the community, rather than organizations bearing that responsibility. Although not all individuals pass through SUF in their extra-parliamentary careers, I argue that the habits and ways of doing politics SUF promotes become taken-for-granted amongst extra-

parliamentary leftists. These activities, then, are the core activities of the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, and as Sara notes, the activities that extra-parliamentary leftists like.

SUF, nonetheless, is explicitly a youth organization. Individuals age out of the organization and find or create other extra-parliamentary groups. Discussing the founding of Everything for Everyone, Mats describes the process and his choice to join the group this way:

Colm: How did you decide to join Everything for Everyone?

Mats: It was really natural in some way, a lot of the older generation at SUF founded Everything for Everyone together with activists from related groups who were basically regarded as the same movement, so when I became an adult, it was Everything for Everyone that was the natural step, I think it was the same for many of us in SUF.

Mats argues that joining Everything for Everyone was the ‘natural’ step for him, and that he did not really need to think about the decision. Just as above where individuals argued that it was ‘natural’ for them to be leftists, here, continuing participation in the extra-parliamentary left is natural. After their initial socialization into the habits of the extra-parliamentary left, usually in SUF, individuals who continue in the extra-parliamentary left identify as extra-parliamentary leftists. Participating in politics, then, comes to mean participating in an extra-parliamentary group. Extra-parliamentary activities are not something that ‘they’ do, but instead something that ‘I’ and ‘we’ do. Here, it is important to note that it tends to be social relations that drive group choice after an individual’s initial participation in the extra-parliamentary left. The individuals involved in these social relations often become significant others to each other. Amongst the interview participants, no individual grew up in Malmö, but instead they all moved to the city. However, almost all of them had experience in other extra-parliamentary groups or with extra-parliamentary activities prior to moving to Malmö. In almost all cases, they then chose the group they wanted to join in Malmö due to who they knew, as Mats does above.

While the extra-parliamentary left consists of a number of different groups in Malmö, individuals tend to regard them as different expressions of the same community, rather than competing tendencies. It was not uncommon amongst study participants to be organized in more than one group at a time, or to have

moved between different groups at different times. For example, discussing her group choice, Marie says:

Colm: How did you decide to join [group name]?

Marie: ...it was a bit that you hung out with people from a bunch of different groups but you were organized in one group, so you got to choose from a selection of groups, where do I fit in, and then I took [group name], but then you still did a lot of things together, basically.

Marie suggests that while there existed a division of labor between the different groups, she saw them as promoting and advocating for the same causes. While they may be different groups, Marie highlights that individuals in different groups hang out together and still often cooperate to create extra-parliamentary activities. Group choice, then, has less to do with what we traditionally regard as ideology, and more to do with how individuals see themselves and others in the group. Linn's description of how she chose to join her current group helps to further exemplify this tendency. Linn is a woman in her early 30s who has been a member of 4 different extra-parliamentary groups during her career, starting with SUF. After SUF, she was a member of two groups simultaneously in Malmö, prior to joining a different group five years ago. She describes her decision to join a new group this way:

Colm: How did you decide to join [group name]?

Linn: ...I knew some people in [group name] and wanted to try something different. The groups I was in were very concrete, and I wanted to try something new that wasn't so action-based.

To return to the characteristics of community I discussed in Chapter 3, Linn demonstrates the commitment inherent in extended involvement in the extra-parliamentary left (Lichterman, 1996). Linn has maintained her participation in the extra-parliamentary left for over ten years, engaging in different groups at different times, but seeing them as expressions of the same political habits. In this commitment, and in these repeated face-to-face interactions in both explicitly political contexts and everyday social life, as Marie discusses, individuals create a sense of togetherness and shared fate. Individuals are bound together, and their

successes and failures become each other's. Speaking of why he has remained in the extra-parliamentary left so long, Mats puts it this way:

Colm: Is it important to you that your friends are politically active?

Mats: All the people I hang out with don't have to share my political views, but they have to accept who I am, and I'm bad at not taking a political discussion when it happens. I appreciate, that I have the people I have, and most of them are from politics, it's nice to have those friends because you share so much, you don't have to be confronted by discussions that irritate or frustrate you. If I didn't have friends, I don't think I would be here. I think that you can meet your friends in a political context is a motivating factor, it's not everything, but it makes it a lot easier, if I see who's left after ten years purely statistically, its people who have contact with others and friends. That's what makes people stay, the social context connected to the political.

Mats argues that rather than solely political views, it is social relations and a sense of togetherness that are critical in maintaining his membership. He even suggests that individuals who leave the extra-parliamentary left are those who do not have these social relations. Mats also notes that he wants his friends to 'accept who I am', and that in hanging out with other extra-parliamentary leftists, he can avoid irritating or frustrating discussion. Instead, he 'shares so much' with these other extra-parliamentary leftists. Individuals remain members of the extra-parliamentary left because a sense of intimacy exists in their relations with other extra-parliamentary leftists. These individuals co-determine not only the fate of the extra-parliamentary left, but also the fate of members as individuals (Schutz, 1945). As Strauss (1993) makes clear, repeated interactions build up a history between individuals. These shared experiences and shared histories then lead to this sense of intimacy, and a sense that individuals are pursuing and creating something together.

However, it is not everyone that remains in the extra-parliamentary left. Rather, members of the extra-parliamentary left tend to share certain characteristics. For example, describing a typical member of the extra-parliamentary left, Erik says:

Colm: Who would you say is a usual [extra-parliamentary] leftist person? How would you describe them?

Erik: It is a person who speaks Swedish, clearly... the left is extremely Swedish, and I don't mean now Swedish as in ethnically white, which it also is to a large extent, but like also, people can, they belong to the Swedish environment in some way. Like, one knows the language, one knows the social codes and stuff in the conventional society...you are under 30, people go in full-hearted for it.

Rasmus offers a similar description of extra-parliamentary leftists.

Colm: How would you describe an extra-parliamentary activist?

Rasmus: In terms of background, I don't think there's any big differences, at least what I've noticed. Maybe unfortunately, also, because it shows we don't attract different people, but that we're pretty homogenous. A pretty young person, between 20 and 30, sometimes a bit younger, born in Sweden for the most part, with two Swedish parents, you study or work in the public sector to a large extent...there are some structural reasons, like language, the barrier is really high, it's an intellectual environment, university backgrounds, it can be a bit macho, you're a feminist, but one change I've noticed, it's become more women, it probably has everything to do with political trends. The migration question has always been feminine coded, you notice that most with the Asylum group, the clearest political conflicts which have got space [in society] are coded in that way today.

In both their descriptions of typical members of the extra-parliamentary left, Erik and Rasmus highlight that they experience it as a homogenous environment. Extra-parliamentary leftists tend to be Swedish, well-educated, and individuals who extremely competent within conventional Swedish culture, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Above, I noted that almost all individuals are from working- or middle-class backgrounds, but these individuals are usually born in Sweden, with Swedish heritage. While distinctive, the extra-parliamentary left nonetheless remains connected to the surrounding society. Nonetheless, in his experience, Rasmus highlights that over time the gender distribution of the extra-parliamentary left has changed, with more women involved in the community. Again, however, he connects this to the changing political situation in Swedish society, rather than any changes in the extra-parliamentary left. Marie similarly remarks, '*I think even in AFA [today], the cool guys are in the minority, its mostly girls and nerds there too.*' Within the extra-parliamentary left, anti-fascism has traditionally been coded as masculine and macho, in contrast to migration issues,

which as Rasmus suggests, have been coded as feminine. Marie's comment should be understood in reference to this, as if even AFA is no longer male-dominated, she argues that the gender make-up of the community has changed. The ethnographic data corroborates this, as I would suggest that there are slightly more women than men involved in the extra-parliamentary left.

Yet, leaving aside purely demographic markers, I argue that these characteristics influence the type of habits developed in the extra-parliamentary left. Extra-parliamentary habits involve a specific use of language, a generally intellectual orientation, and a competence in the norms of Swedish society. As I explored in the last chapter, individuals are not stigmatized as extra-parliamentary leftists out of ignorance, it is rather often a choice with full awareness of the habits of conventional Swedish society. Furthermore, the individuals involved in the creation and recreation of those habits have close relationships, with a long, shared history. As this is not a large community, most individuals tend to know or know of each other, and have attended demonstrations, parties, or other events together. They even tend to interact socially, in terms of dating, celebrations, or cookouts. They feel at home in this community, and in the habits of the extra-parliamentary left. However, to outsiders, and even those who possess similar political standpoints, this atmosphere can instead become unwelcoming and uncomfortable. Discussing recruitment issues, for example, Kalle puts it like this:

Colm: What do you think would be the best strategy to recruit more people [to the extra-parliamentary left]?

Kalle: ...I have seen many people come in, in for example [group name], and turn around in the door. Because they don't get it, they're just like what is this here, like they speak weird, I feel like a stranger here, for them, this isn't my subculture. Because this is a subculture and it's not mine. I feel excluded.

As Kalle suggests here, individuals who do not share the habits of the extra-parliamentary left may feel unwelcome. Even individuals who share the political analysis of the extra-parliamentary left may not become extra-parliamentary leftists if they feel they do not belong socially. This is a group of generally young, Swedish, university educated individuals who joined the extra-parliamentary left at an early point in their lives. As Mats argued above, it is the development of social relations that appears to matter most in maintaining participation within

the extra-parliamentary left. While the community may be unwelcoming to outsiders, for those who belong, it conversely becomes an oasis. As Fredrik says:

Colm: What would be a socialist society?

Fredrik: ...it's really important to practice your own utopia, that's a bit of the function [group name] fills too, it's an environment where we can meet, we can come from our workplaces, where most people don't share our opinions, where they have another way to see the world, but here we can meet and maybe not agree on everything but at least feel that we share something. We can talk about things like socialism, which feels really important for me, at least.

Fredrik emphasizes that, for him, the extra-parliamentary left is a place where he feels like he shares something with other extra-parliamentary leftists. In interactions with other extra-parliamentary leftists, he feels at home. For those who remain committed to and involved in the extra-parliamentary left, this feeling plays a vital role. Individuals share not only political opinions, but histories and ways of understanding and acting in the world. They share extra-parliamentary habits. It is this feeling of sharedness, maintained and created in interaction, that leads individuals to the feeling of community and a sense of connected fate. The identities of individuals are bound up with other members of the social world, developed in social relations over a long period of time. It is these feelings that create a sense of belonging, and the community itself. The extra-parliamentary left, then, exists in these interactions and activities that create these feelings. As Julia puts it, in describing who belongs to the extra-parliamentary left:

Colm: Who would you say belongs to the extra-parliamentary left? Who is an extra-parliamentary leftist?

Julia: I would say it's a feeling. If you feel like you do, you do... We don't have membership, you don't get a library card, it's a feeling I think, where you feel at home.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined the process through which individuals become extra-parliamentary leftists. I have argued that this process begins early on in life for most individuals. Individuals grow up in environments characterized by significant others who hold leftist political views, and where leftist habits become taken-for-granted. Demographically, these individuals tend to grow up in working- or middle-class homes, with Swedish parents. Often, the question individuals must answer is not whether they should be leftists, but which type of leftists they should be. In the recruitment practices of the extra-parliamentary left, we see this understanding reflected, where potential members of the extra-parliamentary left are those who already hold leftist views. Extra-parliamentary leftists, as individuals, are not responsible for convincing others of the correctness of their political views, but instead individuals are responsible for acquiring these views themselves.

After developing leftist habits, individuals often pass through a social world that orbits the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. The two most common paths amongst the participants in this study are the subcultural path and the institutional path. Within these social worlds, individuals encounter extra-parliamentary leftist ideas, activities, and individuals and begin to develop extra-parliamentary habits. This, however, occurs only in interaction and participation within these social worlds. Today, potential members of the extra-parliamentary left are primarily understood as those who take the subcultural path. Yet, as the connections and links between subcultural social worlds and the extra-parliamentary social world appear to have weakened, the extra-parliamentary left has struggled to attract new members.

After beginning to develop an extra-parliamentary leftist identity, individuals choose to join the extra-parliamentary left due to intrigues, social ties, and a developing moral tension. The activities of the extra-parliamentary left, such as direct action and a style of non-hierarchical organizing, are alluring to these individuals, particularly in contrast to what they define as the boring, pointless world of parliamentary politics. Today, individuals argue that the extra-parliamentary left must consistently demonstrate its distinctiveness and that 'another world is possible' to attract new members and convince wavering individuals to join. However, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that it is the demonstration of the distinctiveness and radicality of the community that

persuades potential members, and affects change in both society and individuals, rather than individuals.

After joining the extra-parliamentary left, extra-parliamentary leftists are often socialized into the community through SUF. However, even individuals who do not join SUF acquire extra-parliamentary habits through a socialization process and develop intimate relations with other members of the extra-parliamentary left. Extra-parliamentary habits become natural and taken-for-granted by individuals, and they identify as extra-parliamentary leftists. In the activities of the extra-parliamentary left, individuals feel at home and experience that they share a goal and common fate with other extra-parliamentary leftists. In a politics of community, I call the interactions that create these feelings community spaces. Yet, as Blumer and Schutz both note, every interaction contains an element of chance. Things can always go wrong, and rather than feeling at home, individuals can feel lost in interaction. I therefore now turn my attention to the creation of community spaces, and the strategies the extra-parliamentary left uses to protect these spaces, as well as the conflicts that can threaten to destroy the home extra-parliamentary leftists have found and created.

8 The Fragility and Feeling of Community Spaces

In Spring 2018, I sat in the basement of a club in Malmö. It was dark. The air was filled with fog, with individuals unable to resist the lure of a new smoke machine bought for the party. The party was just beginning, with only about 20 people in the room. In one corner, two individuals sat behind a table covered with books and t-shirts, laughing quietly. The t-shirts bore slogans like ‘make fascists afraid again’ or ‘refugees welcome’ and many showed the logo of AFA. The books were from authors such as Karl Marx, David Harvey, Silvia Federici, and Naomi Klein, covering topics ranging from capitalism to feminism to the climate crisis. I was seated slightly to the side of this table, observing the room, and making small talk with participants I had met before. This party was a bit different from others I had attended. Rather than taking place in a space controlled by an extra-parliamentary leftist group, it was held at Plan B, a profit-driven club in Malmö which is open to the public and often attracts individuals from outside the extra-parliamentary left. One member of the group organizing the party remarked to me that they hoped ‘a lot of randoms’ showed up, since the group needed money to pay their rent for the month. In other words, this person explicitly hoped that individuals who were not extra-parliamentary leftists would attend the party and spend money. As I sat chatting on the low wooden benches close to this merchandise table, I noticed two individuals I had never seen before entering the room. These two individuals appeared to be about 20 years old and were not dressed as extra-parliamentary leftists. They wore no black, had visible make-up, and their outfits had no obvious political message. As they entered, they seemed slightly confused. They gazed around the room with a glazed look on their faces, appearing startled by the amount of smoke in the room. They then appeared to notice the merchandise table and become even more unsure. The table was located directly across from the entrance of the room and was almost impossible to miss

when one walked into the room. These two individuals looked at each other and seemed to decide to approach the table. They approached slowly and hesitantly. When they reached the table, the following interaction took place:

Party guest: Are you left-wing extremists?

Party host: Hmmm. We see ourselves as part of Malmö's extra-parliamentary movement. We are a socialist and feminist [organization] which acts...But, yes, I believe that most of us would probably identify as left-wing extremists.

Party guest: Oh. Ok.

After this brief interaction, these two individuals looked down at the books and t-shirts on the table and browsed through them for a few seconds. They then turned and walked away from the table, moving over towards the bar. I did not see them again that night. If we analyze this interaction in terms of the perspective developed in the previous chapter, these two semi-confused individuals are now potential members of the extra-parliamentary left, having found the social world. However, in this chapter, I focus instead on the perspective of the individuals behind the merchandise table and the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. This party, and others like it, is an attempt to create a community space, or interactions where extra-parliamentary leftists can feel at home. Yet, as we see in the interaction above, extra-parliamentary leftists must constantly manage threats, tensions, and denials of their identities in their attempts at creating community spaces. Rather than being identified as socialists or feminists, this party guest identifies the individuals behind the table as left-wing extremists. Here, the party host answers the question in noting how 'we see ourselves' but at the same time, acknowledges that most individuals in the extra-parliamentary left would probably also identify as left-wing extremists. A tension exists between how the surrounding society views the extra-parliamentary left, and how extra-parliamentary leftists view themselves. In Chapter 6, I explored how extra-parliamentary leftists at times take on this identity as dangerous left-wing extremists in their interactions in other societal arenas.

However, within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, the audience for actions is not social democrats or the police, but instead other extra-parliamentary leftists. To authenticate (Strauss, 1978) an identity as an extra-parliamentary leftist, other extra-parliamentary leftists must confirm this identity

in interaction. When these identity confirmations occur, community spaces arise. In this chapter, I examine the strategies extra-parliamentary leftists use to allow these confirmations to occur, despite the inherent tensions between an anti-capitalist identity and the surrounding capitalist society, focusing on the process of self-segregation (Becker, 1963/1997). This self-segregation enables the intersubjective accomplishment of the sharing of a marginalized worldview, and the constant recreation of the community of the extra-parliamentary left (P. Berger, 1970). Yet, this process of self-segregation is fragile, and prone to interruption or breach, even in interactions with other extra-parliamentary leftists. This chapter, therefore, addresses not only the question of how extra-parliamentary leftists create community spaces, but also answers the final research question for this dissertation, namely, *how do individuals manage threats, tensions, and denials of their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists?*

8.1 Anti-Fascism is Always Self-Defense: Aggressive and Relational Self-Segregation

Within the extra-parliamentary left, the slogan ‘anti-fascism is always self-defense’ is one the most common political mottos. In her description of the events surrounding Kämpa Showan/Kämpa Malmö⁶⁷, Hansen (2019, pp. 399-413) shows how extra-parliamentary leftists repeatedly used the phrase as a means of mobilizing anti-fascist resistance after the neo-Nazi attack on left-wing activists in 2014. However, she also points out that the phrase often sparks “a recurrent debate within the left: [about] whether confrontational tactics and violence can be considered legitimate for fighting fascism” (Hansen, 2019, p. 407). Peterson (2001/2018) similarly argues that the legitimacy of violent tactics has often been contentious within the left, and even within the radical left, in Sweden. As I discussed in Chapter 5, we can remember that already in 1891 conflicts about the legitimacy of violence divided the fledgling social democratic movement (see 5.1). Similarly, I have previously suggested that a willingness to use violence is usually

⁶⁷ On International Women’s Day in 2014, four activists were attacked by neo-Nazis, with one of them, Showan Shattak, suffering wounds that placed him in intensive care. After the attack, a series of demonstrations were organized in support of the activists. See Hannerz and Kimvall (2019) or Hansen (2019) for more.

the marker of ‘radical’ political movements in academic research (see e.g. Alimi et al., 2015). When Swedish authorities or academics classify the extra-parliamentary left as radical movement, or as consisting of radical social movement organizations, it is almost always because of the willingness of extra-parliamentary leftists to use violence in their conflicts with fascist organizations. For example, a report from the Center against Violence-Affirming Extremism (CVE) argues that what differentiates the extra-parliamentary left from other leftist environments is the idea “that criminality is both legitimate and necessary. Members and supporters advocate, promote, or engage in violence, threats, [and] coercion” (Center mot våldsbejakande extremism, 2020, p. 3). In these understandings, it is violent acts or a willingness to engage in violent acts that characterizes the extra-parliamentary left.

Here, I make a slightly different argument. I argue that we should instead view and understand the extra-parliamentary left’s relationship to violence through the lens of aggressive self-segregation (Becker, 1963/1997). While specific habits surrounding violence do mark the extra-parliamentary left out as a distinctive political actor, extra-parliamentary leftists view violent anti-fascism and other forms of violent tactics as creating a space in which the extra-parliamentary left can exist. When this space is created, identity confirmations can occur, and community spaces can arise. Paradoxically, however, too much aggressive self-segregation can harm the identity confirmation process as habits surrounding violence take over and do not allow space for the other habits of the community to be enacted. In their activities, the extra-parliamentary left attempts to find this balance, and it is an awareness of this need for balance that can at time lead to conflicts surrounding the appropriateness of violent tactics.

Violence against other individuals, rather than against property, occurs rarely in the extra-parliamentary left. When it does occur, it tends to take place in connection with anti-fascist events or tactics. However, one should not overestimate the use of violence in the extra-parliamentary left. During my fieldwork, I would argue that violence was employed three times or less as a political tactic, depending on how precisely we define the term violence. Within Sweden, I suggest that it did not occur much more frequently, and largely only occurred in connection with counterdemonstrations against fascist groups, such as in Gothenburg in 2017 or Kungälv in 2019 (SVT, 2017, 2019a). In connection with previous research into the extra-parliamentary left, this is unsurprising. For example, Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015, p. 727) find that “violent and illegal

actions had become increasingly questioned within the activist milieu we studied.” At the same time, they also note that while “violence is not necessarily practiced, it is not ruled out either” (Jacobsson & Sörbom, 2015, p. 727). Amongst the participants in this study, similar thoughts were expressed. For example, Selma expresses her thoughts on violence like this:

Colm: How do you view violence in terms of political action?

Selma: I see violence as a necessary evil. Something that you have to do sometimes, which is sometimes needed, but that shouldn't need to exist. But I think there's often not another way, I mean violence is how, usually when you speak about this it's about using violence against Nazis, and there's no other way to do that. Because they take over if you don't keep them away, and they're going to use violence regardless of whether others do or not. And in cities where Nazis have power, people who are leftist or racialized are assaulted, that's just how it is. And it can't be that way. It is better to make sure that they don't have a place on the streets, and I see it as self-defense. Or a way to defend others, it's better that, if we say that I would do it, I think it's better that I choose because of my ideology to fight with a Nazi instead of that a random person on the street gets attacked because they are trans. Or because they have a leftist t-shirt, or whatever... Then I think it sucks that we have to do it, it's terrible with violence, even for the one who does it, I even feel bad for the Nazis basically. And then, I think it's really important to remember that the state also engages in violence, and almost all people who say they're against violence think it's completely ok for the police to engage in violence. And then it's just a question about which type of violence you think is ok.

In this quote, Selma frames violence as reactive. She suggests that extra-parliamentary leftists use violence in response to the provocations of Nazis, rather than initiating the violence themselves. Yet, Selma also argues that if she, or others with her ideology, were not to use violence, Nazis ‘would take over’ and that it is therefore important ‘to make sure that they don't have a place on the streets.’ In these thoughts, we see similarities to what Jämte (2017) describes in his study on the current frames of anti-fascism in Denmark and Sweden. Jämte (2017, p. 257) finds that many activists see anti-fascist violence as a “way to open the public space for their political allies” and that “radical anti-fascists work as ‘guardsmen’ or ‘defensive units’, which makes it possible to build broader left-wing or anti-racist movements.” In this understanding, without a willingness to engage in anti-fascist violence, it would be impossible for left-wing movements or groups to exist. Kalle,

a former member of AFA, argues this way in discussing his understanding of anti-fascism:

Colm: I wonder if you can describe a bit about what you think anti-fascism is, or how you work in an anti-fascist way?

Kalle: Anti-fascism as we know it now is a reactive movement which in itself cannot be progressive, but which can work as a protective fence for a progressive movement, but it can also work as a protective group for people who are affected by fascist organizations. A lot of minorities, the working class which wants to organize in a union or whatever, in England unions are attacked pretty much constantly by different neo-fascist groups, like that. But it's really reactive, it's not a movement that can win by itself.

Kalle again argues that anti-fascism is a reactive practice. However, he emphasizes what he views as the protective nature of anti-fascist activities, suggesting that the role of anti-fascism is to allow other groups to organize, rather than to 'win by itself.' Without anti-fascist actions, including violence, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that the extra-parliamentary left would not exist. While the violence may be viewed as a response to the actions of neo-Nazis or fascists, it also is viewed as opening space in society for leftist individuals to interact. Leftist movements or groups can only arise and survive, in this understanding, when this protective barrier exists. Here, I argue that anti-fascist activities should be understood as a form of aggressive self-segregation. Becker (1963/1997, p. 96) defines self-segregation as "behavior [that protects] the musician from the square audience, and by extension, the conventional society." Anti-fascism protects leftist individuals from fascists in the surrounding society. However, I do want to emphasize that I make no judgement on the truthfulness of this claim.

When individuals engage in anti-fascist activities, space for interaction opens. As P. Berger (1970, p. 360) notes, "ideas require social resonance to attain and retain their plausibility... it is in conversation with others that an ordered reality is built up and kept going." It is in these interactions that the extra-parliamentary left comes into existence and where "ideas become institutionalized among movement members" (Bordt, 1997, p. 139). Furthermore, in these interactions, identity confirmation can occur, as identities only "emerge from the process of social interaction in which other people are defining a person to himself" (Blumer, 1969, p. 12). As identity confirmations occur, community spaces arise.

Individuals confirm to each other that they are extra-parliamentary leftists, and that they share the same goals, hopes, and habits. Individuals become *comrades*, committed both to each other and to the way of life of the extra-parliamentary left. Individuals, then, come to take-for-granted that extra-parliamentary habits are shared in these community spaces (Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973).

Aggressive self-segregation is viewed as a key aspect of this process. Donnelly and Young (1988) argue that certain acts or interactions carry more weight than others in confirming an individual's identity as a good member of a group. Here, I suggest that violence, and particularly anti-fascist acts of violence, are the quickest way to establish a reputation as a reliable comrade. Since anti-fascism is viewed as necessary for both the creation and continuing existence of the extra-parliamentary left, a willingness to engage in violent anti-fascism grants individuals a higher status within the community. Anti-fascist activities come to be one of the core activities of the social world of the extra-parliamentary left (Strauss, 1978). It becomes an activity and ideology, or habit, that defines who extra-parliamentary leftists are. Violence against fascists, for community members, is morally correct.

Jamte's (2013) work on anti-fascism in Sweden suggests that AFA played an almost hegemonic role in the extra-parliamentary left during the 1990s. I do not suggest that this is the case today. Nonetheless, AFA, and affiliation with anti-fascist acts, retains a high degree of status within the extra-parliamentary left. To return to the party described above, the group hosting this party was not AFA. Nonetheless, they still sold memorabilia with AFA's logo, placed AFA stickers around the room, and hung an AFA flag at the party. In my field work, the clearest examples of the status of anti-fascist acts comes not from individuals participating in these activities, but from how they discussed preparing to engage in these acts. For example, after the demonstration in Gothenburg (see Chapter 1), I chatted with Frans about how the day had gone. As we talked, he mentioned how tired he was, noting that he hadn't slept well the night before and was a bit hungover. He said that he always needed to drink a few beers the night before a demonstration to be able to sleep. Otherwise, the anticipation, excitement, and fear about what was to come would keep him up. As he said, '*you don't really want to have to do it [violence]. But at the same time, you can't betray the others*' (Field notes). An activist in Brand speaks similarly about their feelings prior to attending an anti-fascist demonstration, like the one in Gothenburg. He says "as long as I've

been active, I have struggled with the fact that I'm not good at violence. I think its troublesome and scary. I would rather not do it, but I understand that I have to" (Concha, 2017, p. 48). Failing to engage in anti-fascist acts would render individuals suspect. An important extra-parliamentary habit regards viewing violence as at times necessary and legitimate. However, when individuals do participate in anti-fascist activities, they instead confirm their identities as comrades, or as extra-parliamentary leftists. Alexander, for example, discusses the differences between his friends and comrades in this way:

...I have many comrades who are not my friends. I don't have so many friends in the autonomous left. But I want to see everyone as my comrades. I think there's a difference there. Because socialism is togetherness. A comrade is someone you can trust and rely on. But it doesn't have to be someone you want to hang out with. A comrade, for me, it's someone, I should be able to trust them with my life. Because if we, for example, are together in a demonstration and a police officer comes and is going to beat the shit out of me, then that person should protect me. They should be my comrades even if they don't personally like me. Because we are socialists. And we should be able to trust each other. That's what I think.

For Alexander, other extra-parliamentary leftists are people who he can 'trust with his life.' Although they may not personally get along, extra-parliamentary leftists should be committed to the same goals and act in the same way. When individuals engage in acts that are viewed as protecting the community and those within it, they can confirm their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists. These acts also help individuals to accumulate status. Although all organizations in the extra-parliamentary left are horizontally structured (Flesher Fominaya, 2007), individuals are nonetheless aware that an internal power and status hierarchy exists. Discussing this seeming contradiction, Lina says "*there's a lot of informal power, people who know everything, then you go automatically to them if you're new, they know how things should be and so. I think that in some way you try to work to have a flat structure, but I think it's an ongoing process since at the same time there are hierarchies.*" Hierarchies in the extra-parliamentary left arise out of what Snyder and Fessler (2014) call a *prestige-based system*. This means that status "is achieved through other's recognition of the prestigious individual's skill, accomplishments, or expertise" rather than through, for example, a formal institutional role (Snyder & Fessler, 2014, p. 451). Acts recognized as anti-fascist grant status within the extra-parliamentary left. This is particularly important in

terms of identity confirmation, as it means that individuals and groups who are associated with anti-fascism become difficult to ignore in identity processes (Strauss, 1959/1977).

Yet, just as extra-parliamentary leftists seldom engage in violence, anti-fascist acts are merely one core activity of extra-parliamentary leftists. The most common activity in the repertoire of the extra-parliamentary left is demonstrations. During my field work, I attended over 25 demonstrations, covering topics ranging from anti-capitalism to protests against cuts in healthcare funding. Demonstrations are an example of activities that can take place due to anti-fascist organizing, in the eyes of extra-parliamentary leftists. When demonstrations are successful, a community space is created. Individuals feel at home in interactions with others at the demonstration, confirming their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists and confirming that the habits of the extra-parliamentary left are shared.



Picture: A picture of the demonstration published on the demonstration's Facebook event the day after May 1st.

The International Workers' Day demonstration in 2019 was the largest demonstration I attended in Malmö during my time in the field. There were about 800-1000 demonstrators present, and the mood during the demonstration was jovial. The demonstrators chanted 'Alerta! Alerta! Anti-Fascista!' with

enthusiasm, seeming energized by the presence of so many others. An informant remarked to me that they were surprised that there were so many revolutionary leftists in Malmö. At one point, the demonstration walked by Folkets Park in Malmö, which the SAP May 1st demonstration had just entered. As we walked by, a chant rose from the crowd ‘One last deportation—All social democrats over the bridge⁶⁸.’ Although the mood within the demonstration was mainly positive and enthusiastic, it was also conflictual and bitter towards SAP and LO, striking a sharp contrast. Earlier in the day, about 15 extra-parliamentary leftists had been arrested for attempting to prevent the SAP demonstration from entering Folkets Park (SVT, 2019c). The demonstration took place in the shadow of proposed changes to the right to strike for Swedish workers. As I explored in Chapter 6, extra-parliamentary leftists viewed SAP and LO as responsible for advocating for these changes, which they argued would harm the position of workers. The motto for the demonstration was ‘There is no alternative-Destroy Capitalism!’ In a text published on the demonstration’s Facebook event page, extra-parliamentary leftists emphasized how they viewed the actions of SAP and LO as harming the left. For example, beneath the headline ‘For the Right to Strike’, we find the text “Capital’s attack on the worker’s movement continues. With the help of the leaders of LO and SAP, the rich try to tear down everything we have built” (Revolutionär 1 maj Malmö, 2019). Similarly, below the headline ‘For the Class’, we find the following formulation: “Political Parties and union bigwigs do not represent us. Their definitions of the problems are not ours” (Revolutionär 1 maj Malmö, 2019). The May 1st demonstration in 2019 was regarded as a success. In a text published a few days after the demonstration, SUF Lund (2019a) wrote “May 1st this year was a powerful mobilization that we haven’t seen for a long time, and also a day full of actions and agitation. Great to see.”

The May 1st demonstration, often called The Revolutionary First of May, occurs as a result of cooperation between the major extra-parliamentary leftist groups in Malmö. Extra-parliamentary leftists see it as the most important holiday on the extra-parliamentary calendar, and it often includes both an event prior to the demonstration (in 2019, a picnic in a nearby park) and a party after the demonstration (in 2019, a nightclub/afterwork at a nearby punk venue). Individuals view the event as a celebration of the extra-parliamentary left, and even during the pandemic, found ways to mark the occasion. As one participant

⁶⁸ This rhymes in Swedish. ‘En sista deportation—alla sossar över bron’.

said, celebrating May 1st during the pandemic, it's '*a day where we have to do something, we have to celebrate*' (Field notes). Because individuals regard May 1st as so important, the extra-parliamentary left failing to plan a demonstration was regarded as a sign that the extra-parliamentary left would no longer exist. Although celebrations during the pandemic encountered certain unique challenges, in non-pandemic times, individuals still have choices about how to celebrate the 1st of May. In the city of Malmö, for example, there are usually at least four different demonstrations on International Workers' Day: an SAP demonstration, a VP demonstration, an extra-parliamentary left demonstration, and a Communist Party (KP) demonstration. Here, I argue that one of the reasons the May 1st demonstration takes on such importance in the extra-parliamentary left is due to its equation with the existence of the extra-parliamentary left.

Speaking about the May 1st demonstration, and the other potential demonstrations she could attend, Lina, for example, reasons this way:

...it would be cool to join the Left Party's demonstration since they get so many more people than we do. But it's also important to have still an autonomous environment that's not directly connected to the Left Party. So I think it's probably good that we have an autonomous demonstration.

Lina explicitly equates an extra-parliamentary demonstration on May 1st with the existence of an extra-parliamentary environment, which is 'not directly connected to the Left Party.' Although the Left Party may attract more people or have a better demonstration, Lina nonetheless believes that it is important to have a separate demonstration, so that the extra-parliamentary left can maintain its distinctiveness. Hedda reasons similarly around the May 1st demonstration, stating:

...the most important thing [with the 1st of May] is that there are a lot of sympathizers who don't assemble any other time of the year, and to be able to see and show people how big we are, and even to feel inside of us that we exist.

Hedda emphasizes that the demonstration is important not only for those involved in the planning, but even for 'sympathizers', or individuals who only rarely attend extra-parliamentary events. At the demonstration, individuals can see that others share their views and goals, and 'feel inside of us that we exist.' The demonstration, for Hedda, helps to show extra-parliamentary leftists that they are

not alone, but that they are committed together with others to the extra-parliamentary left. The May 1st demonstration, then, is a form of *relational self-segregation*. In relational self-segregation, individuals attempt to limit their interactions to individuals who share the same identities. In these interactions, individuals have the chance to not only confirm that others share their interpretations, meanings, and habits, but that the extra-parliamentary left exists. Without interactional confirmation, individuals can neither maintain identities, habits, nor assumptions about the shared nature of their understandings. As Schutz and Luckmann (1973, p. 68) argue, it is only in interaction that “the intersubjectivity of the life-world is developed and continuously confirmed.” The May 1st demonstration involves a process of self-segregation not only from Nazis and fascists, but also from the surrounding, conventional society and other types of leftists. If the border between the Left Party and the extra-parliamentary left were to break down or cease to exist, individuals argue that the extra-parliamentary left would cease to exist. It would no longer be a distinctive group or community, but rather merely a part of a broader leftist group. Individuals can claim that the extra-parliamentary exists, to themselves, to other extra-parliamentary leftists, and to outsiders because it has its own demonstration. In Strauss’s language, the representation claim succeeds (Strauss, 1993).

Furthermore, in the act of demonstrating, individuals confirm in interaction with others that they are extra-parliamentary leftists, or that they are comrades. Attending the May 1st demonstration, as well as other smaller demonstrations, helps individuals to establish a reputation as reliable community members. Acting comradely, or as a comrade, encompasses the major aspects of an identity as an extra-parliamentary leftist. While demonstrations and anti-fascists actions are spectacular, public examples of the process of identity confirmation, everyday interactions also confirm an individual’s status as a comrade. Individuals who help to clean up after a party or individuals who sit behind a merchandise table are acting comradely. While these everyday acts confirm an individual’s identity, if we consider status, it is participation in the core activities of the social world that tend to grant individuals more status and prestige. Demonstrations, as events that confirm the existence of the community as a recognizable entity, are one such activity. Similarly, because extra-parliamentary leftists argue that it is only through anti-fascist activities that a social world can exist, anti-fascism is another. Each activity also relies upon a form of self-segregation. Without a willingness to use violence, or aggressive self-segregation, individuals argue that leftists would be

unable to meet, interact, and create a leftist group, movement, or community. Similarly, without their own demonstration, or relational self-segregation, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that the extra-parliamentary left would not exist.

Yet, it is here that we see the inherent tension in a politics of community between stability and fluidity. Although self-segregation may be required to bring the extra-parliamentary left into existence, it should not be the sole, defining characteristic of the extra-parliamentary left. Although, for example, a willingness to use violence and an understanding of the legitimacy of violent tactics forms part of the habits of extra-parliamentary leftists, violence, itself, is not constructed as desirable. Although a legitimate political tactic, violence should not occur in interactions between comrades. At times, this can become problematic in the extra-parliamentary left. Tove, for example, argues that when individuals use violence, it can become a habit. She says:

Colm: How do you view violence? Do you think it's effective?

Tove: ...I think that you can defend that you've used violence, and it's understandable that people do it, but I also think that when you build in violence to change [society], it becomes a bit that you build up a society characterized by violence in some way. I think it's hard to use violence, and then to stop using it, people don't work like that...

Tove argues that individuals who use violence often have trouble not using violence, even in situations where it is not called for. Violent habits can come to characterize interactions, rather than comradely behavior. In her work on the German *Autonom*, Leach (2009, p. 1059) suggests that an important part of the *Autonom* identity is that individuals “learn how to resist being dominated by others, but also how to resist dominating others themselves.” In the extra-parliamentary left, I argue that something similar occurs. Part of acting comradely involves refusing to dominate other individuals. Yet, when violent habits take over, this is not the case. Similarly, when violent acts become the sole core activity of extra-parliamentary leftists, they can engage in too much relational self-segregation. Rather than self-segregating from fascists, conventional society, and other leftists, they can even begin self-segregating from other extra-parliamentary leftists. Speaking of their time in AFA, one individual puts it like this:

...it's a really masculine environment, these militant anti-fascist groups. The practice [of anti-fascism] is probably obvious, that you can live such a life. You go in, when it was the most, in the early 2000s, and until I don't know 2012, 13, 14 it was, that you go into a criminal, or semi-criminal, approach to communication, about how you move in society, how you sleep, that you should be awake at night, to how you eat, how you train and those things, I mean you build your whole life around these questions. And then the rhetoric also. Like that we never forgive or no pasaran and these things which are for a lot of people anti-fascism, it has a tendency to become phrase radical. Or there is an active militant practice that obviously works, and that's why it's defensible, but there's a rhetoric that's pretty extreme and maybe untrue. It's not like when you yell no pasaran in Salem⁶⁹, that you actually don't let them pass, there was no one who died, but you let people pass, yea, you did what you could but not at the cost of death or prison as much as you could. And there's no one who goes and shoots a Nazi, it's not to every price, it's just something you say, basically, because, I don't know, historical reasons.

This extra-parliamentary leftist argues that their life became entirely built around anti-fascism, at the cost of everything else. While anti-fascist violence is the quickest way to establish a reputation as a reliable comrade, when anti-fascism becomes the only activity, there can be a segmentation of the social world. In other words, individuals cut themselves off entirely from the rest of the extra-parliamentary left, pursuing solely anti-fascism rather than extra-parliamentary politics. Peterson (2001/2018), particularly, argues that in AFA violence can become an end in itself. Individuals no longer use violence to create space for community interactions, it instead becomes the organizing principle. Here, we also see that this individual notes that anti-fascist groups tended to be 'very masculine' environments. Even in an explicitly feminist or anti-sexist social world, violence is often connected with masculinity by the participants, and problematized as an expression of gender norms. Maja, for example, discusses violence this way:

⁶⁹ Between 2000-2010 a yearly march was organized in Salem by various neo-Nazi groups. Each year, left-wing groups organized a counterdemonstration and violent confrontations often occurred. See Wahlström (2011).

Colm: How do you define violence?

Maja: ... I define it mostly as physical violence, when you hit someone, when you hit each other, with or without a weapon. And I think generally, it's something you see pretty often in a political movement, and I don't know, I think I easily end up in situations where it happens spontaneously, but I have a difficult time when it's planned for. It always feels a bit like, like you're a school shooter, when you sit in a basement with a bunch of dudes who want to talk about political violence, I always get bad vibes. But generally, I'm a reasonable girl who thinks that you can't do such things casually because it's dangerous and dumb and I think dudes are self-important when they just want to talk about it. At the same time, I don't think it's so objectionable, I mean I don't really have strong feelings about it, I mostly just support people when they talk about it. When it becomes a thing, and when you jump there directly from nowhere which can happen when people need to show how tough they are instead of talking through, but is this the best way to achieve something, should we really [do it]. You can't really separate, I have a tough time separating it from the individuals who feel like they often just want to prove they are men, and that irritates me sometimes. A lot. So in that way I think political violence often becomes something very, very lame. Because so many dudes want to talk about it so often, I hate when they do it.

Maja explicitly connects violence, and the use of violence, with individuals who 'want to prove they are men.' Although I noted above that anti-fascist violence can grant status in the extra-parliamentary left, we see here another tension between the surrounding society and the extra-parliamentary left. Because both the social world of the extra-parliamentary left and individuals in the extra-parliamentary left remain connected to the surrounding society, breaches or cracks in self-segregation can occur. Here, there is a particular tension between expressions of masculinity and the feminist or anti-sexist habits that should characterize a member of the extra-parliamentary left. It is this tension that is the most pressing tension in the extra-parliamentary left, and particularly in the everyday life of extra-parliamentary leftists. Identity conflicts surrounding gender norms, expressions of masculinity, and the meaning of feminism often occur. At times, these conflicts can even lead to identity degradation, rather than identity confirmation, as individuals are denied an identity as an extra-parliamentary leftist. I therefore now turn my attention to this process, and a discussion of what feminism and anti-sexism mean in the extra-parliamentary left.

8.2 Feminism and Anti-Sexism: Identity Degradation

Until this point in the dissertation, I have focused on the extra-parliamentary left as a stigmatized actor in the broader Swedish political arena. Yet, as Becker (1963/1997, p. 1) reminds us, “all social groups make rules and attempt, at some times and under some circumstances, to enforce them.” Garfinkel (1956, p. 420) makes a similar point, suggesting that “the structural conditions of status degradation are universal to all societies.” Although there are few, if any, formal institutions in the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, there are nonetheless rules that extra-parliamentary leftists should follow. When individuals fail to adhere to these rules, they can be understood as engaging in behavior that should deny them membership in the extra-parliamentary left. In other words, even within the extra-parliamentary left, stigmatization processes still take place (Lamont, 2018). At times, these processes of stigmatization can turn into processes of identity degradation, or situations where individuals and groups are deprived of “their prior identities” (E. Berger, 2006, p. 308; Garfinkel, 1956). In the extra-parliamentary left, processes of identity degradation occur most often in relation to questions surrounding feminism, and behavior between men and women. Nonetheless, it is important to note that it could happen in relation to other behaviors, but that these behaviors seldom become relevant. For example, in discussing with individuals who would not be welcome to join an extra-parliamentary group, individuals who work with or for the police are often named. Similarly, if an extra-parliamentary leftist joined the police, they too would no longer be welcome within the community. But, as one participant put it, *‘it doesn’t happen, it’s not really super relevant’* (Field notes). It does happen, however, in relation to issues surrounding gender.

Above, I argued that the extra-parliamentary leftists engage in self-segregation to protect community spaces from outside interference and the surrounding society. Here, I argue that this process is most fragile in terms of gender relations and gender roles. Extra-parliamentary leftists struggle to create interactions removed from what they understand as the mainstream, or conventional, interactional pattern of gender relations in both public events as well as in everyday interactions. An interesting example of this struggle regards the word feminism itself. Some extra-parliamentary leftist groups and individuals prefer not to identify as feminist, choosing instead to identify as anti-sexist. In my field work, this initially surprised me. I have always associated individuals and groups who

refuse or reject the term feminist with political movements who work to uphold the current gender norms and order in society, rather than those who wish to overthrow it. When I first asked a participant about the differences between feminism and anti-sexism, they mostly waved the question away, suggesting it was something people said, but that it didn't really matter (*Field Notes*). However, one night, after attending a lecture on abortion rights and laws in Sweden, I was invited to join a few other attendees for a beer afterwards. As we sat there discussing the increasingly draconian abortion laws in Poland and analyzing the chances of Swedish abortion laws changing, I had the opportunity to ask Anna more about this question of terminology. Anna is a woman in her late 20s who has been active in the extra-parliamentary left for over 10 years and had helped to arrange the lecture. During our conversation, she was very vocal in her disgust for the mainstream feminist movement in Sweden, and particularly in discussing the feminism of the Christian Democratic Party and its leader, Ebba Busch. As the conversation lulled, I asked her about the distinction between feminism and anti-sexism. She responded '*...I don't want to be on the same side, or in the same movement as Ebba. That's not feminism. The problem is that the liberals have taken the word. It means nothing today. Sometimes I don't want to call myself a feminist, if that's what people think it means*' (*Field notes*).

In the process of self-segregation, Becker (1963/1997, p. 100) argues that a specific use of language often develops. Here, I suggest that one way to understand the use of anti-sexist rather than feminist is on these terms. Individuals use the term anti-sexist to represent the community that they belong to, both in interactions and in descriptions of their political group. As far as I am aware, there is no other movement in Sweden that identifies as anti-sexist rather than feminist. For Anna, using the term feminist denotes belonging to a different movement, that she does not identify with. To remove herself from what she regards as mainstream feminism, she therefore, at times, chooses to identify as anti-sexist rather than feminist. Notably, this is not to say that the words feminism or feminist is not in use in the extra-parliamentary left. However, even here, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that it is important to separate their type of feminism from what is often referred to as 'liberal feminism.' For example, Olivia says (this interview occurred shortly after my conversation with Anna):

Colm: I was wondering, I talked with someone the other day, who said that they didn't want to call themselves a feminist anymore, because of liberal feminism, that the liberals have taken the word, what do you think about that?

Olivia: hmm, my thoughts are basically that liberal feminists aren't feminists! That's my opinion. They don't do feminism. Because they are so bad at understanding this with structures, and, I mean, liberal feminism, it's basically taken away big parts of feminism, they just pick a little bit, which is like that women should have the right to have a career, they probably have something else too obviously, but they don't seem to understand structures really, and I think that's an important part of feminism...and that's why I don't think liberal feminists are feminists, and it really sucks that they are taking the word, but I wouldn't say it's so taken that you can't call yourself feminist anymore.

Olivia argues that liberal feminists have misunderstood feminism, and that it is them who are not the real feminists. Feminism, in the extra-parliamentary left, focuses on issues of power and structure. As Olivia notes, extra-parliamentary leftists regard other understandings of feminism as missing the point and failing to understand these two issues. This understanding of feminism resembles the radical feminism of the lesbian feminist community Taylor and Whittier (1992/1999) study or the 'politicos' in Polletta's (2002, p. 151) study of the women's liberation movement in the United States. As I have previously noted, extra-parliamentary politics involves a politics of the first person (Leach, 2009). Interactions within the extra-parliamentary left, therefore, should adhere to an anti-sexist or radical feminist pattern, where the impact of gender structures (i.e. the patriarchy) should not influence interactions between individuals. All community interactions should take place within an anti-sexist community space.

In the establishment of Collective Effort, a socialist training club, this process is immediately apparent. Collective Effort was founded in late 2017. At the time, a participant described it as founded by '*some former leftist activists*' who wanted a means of keeping in touch with the extra-parliamentary community in Malmö (*Field Notes*). Previous research suggests that gyms and sport clubs are usually places where gender hierarchies are reinforced and where a 'macho' culture dominates (see e.g. Brown, 2006; Craig & Liberti, 2007; Hertzog & Lev, 2019). The founders of Collective Effort started the club partly as a reaction to their experiences with non-socialist gyms and training spaces. For example, in an interview with the Left Party's magazine, one of the founders argues that "*most other martial art clubs suffer from a macho atmosphere*" while another discusses her previous experiences with training clubs, saying "*there were so many domination techniques [at the other clubs], or really all of them. I don't know how I stayed as long*

as I did' (Folkviljan, 2020, p. 15). In contrast to these sexist, macho training clubs, a founder describes the 'training culture' at Collective Effort like this:

It doesn't matter if you're a bit too old, if you're not really talented, or are a bit lame and crippled, everyone is welcome. It's a comradely atmosphere, to put it simply.

(Folkviljan, 2020, p. 15)

Here, this founder uses the phrase 'comradely atmosphere.' Collective Effort is comradely because individuals treat each other equally, and do not seek to dominate others. Yet, even in attempts to maintain this comradely atmosphere, problems relating to gender relations arise. Kleinman and Cabaniss (2019, p. 122) argue that the "patriarchy is continually lived out as people interact in patterned ways in everyday life." At Collective Effort, the founders acknowledge that they have not fully succeeded in self-segregating from the conventional pattern of gender relations and note that the type of 'macho-culture' that can typically characterize interactions at gyms can seep into this attempt at building community spaces. For example, one founder states that "*we are not immune to any structures. But I experience that we try to address them immediately*" while another points out "*we suffer from this [macho-culture] as well to some extent, but we try to counteract it*" (Folkviljan, 2020, p. 15). The founders acknowledge here that "gender inequality is part of mundane reality and occurs when people take the path of least resistance" (Kleinman & Cabaniss, 2019, p. 122). While interactions between extra-parliamentary leftists should take place in anti-sexist community spaces, individuals are aware that this is likely impossible while the current structures of inequality in our societies remain in place. Rather, when individuals are interpreted as acting according to the interactional pattern of the patriarchy, extra-parliamentary leftists should immediately attempt to counteract these actions, restoring the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left, as the founders of Collective Effort argue. In making these tensions visible and attempting to address them, the individuals argue that Collective Effort takes on a comradely atmosphere. In other words, the important aspect is attempting to maintain the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left from the surrounding society, even when the self-segregation does not entirely succeed.

If individuals, conversely, did not attempt to address these tensions, assumptions about the anti-sexist nature of the extra-parliamentary left would be

difficult to maintain. It is here that we see the inherent fragility of community spaces. Community spaces must be constantly recreated in interaction. Taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be an extra-parliamentary leftist can always become problematic, and a comradely atmosphere can always become an uncomradely, or conventional, atmosphere. We see another example of this inability to maintain self-segregation in relation to gender when Adrian discusses the atmosphere of his current group:

Colm: You said earlier that in your group you try to create a place where you can have a little socialist society in some way, do you think, or do you see that it becomes socialist?

Adrian: We have talked about it a few times in the group, that even within the activist left obviously, we are not free from the norms of society and the structures we live under so, there are a lot who noticed that it is usually the women who put out the coffee and watch the kids and clean while the men are them who like, I don't know, write speeches and whatever. Do the things that give more credit...It might be different if we were more, then it might be more obvious, that we are not perfect socialists today, but I don't know, we try to think a bit about it, but... (trails off).

Adrian links explicitly to questions of status, noting that male activists tend to do the tasks that are given more weight. When this occurs, male activists can more easily confirm their identities as comrades. However, Adrian also points out that this is something that his group has discussed, and that they 'try to think a bit about it.' Again, we see an attempt to make the problem visible and address it, even if it does not always succeed. In her study of men in the movement against domestic and sexual violence, Macomber (2018) discusses a similar issue to the one Adrian identifies. She argues that "because male activists benefit from male privilege, even the most well-intentioned ally might inadvertently co-opt women's leadership and experience an elevated status in the movement" (Macomber, 2018, p. 1511). She continues in noting that "although these are often inadvertent and unintended consequences, they are consequences nonetheless and they serve as constant reminders that gendered power differentials are deeply entrenched" (Macomber, 2018, p. 1511). As extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to create comradely, equal community spaces which do not follow the interactional pattern of conventional society, the entrenched nature of gender relations often become

problematic. In some cases, this can lead extra-parliamentary leftists to decide to further self-segregate, through engaging in separatist activism.

There were at least two separatist groups active in Malmö while I was in the field, Mangla and Support Your Local Feminist (SYLF). Separatism, here, means that certain groups of individuals are not welcome in the group (here, this is men, in other situations, it can also be, for example, non-racialized individuals). Mangla (2019), discussing their choice of separatism, writes that “we chose to organize in a female and trans separatist manner. We do not see this as an ideology, but as a strategy in a male dominated movement.” Mangla makes clear that they do not view this as an ideological decision, but rather that it is an attempt to create spaces that are not male dominated. Separatism, as an organizing strategy, allows Mangla and other separatist groups a better chance at creating anti-sexist community spaces, in this understanding. Julia, who has previously been active within different separatist groups, argues that separatist organizing even helps the entire extra-parliamentary left to become more anti-sexist. She says:

Colm: How do you experience the gender roles in the movement today? Do you think it's the same as it was 15 years ago?

Julia: ...we have the separatist groups who do feminist activism to a greater degree, and it was also, I joined, we started [group name 1] because [group name 2] was unable to do feminism. And the other autonomous groups also were unable to do anything, it was just talk basically, so we started [group name 1], with the explicit goal that we would be an autonomous group politically, we would do all types of politics which the other groups do but we would have feminism as the main focus so that it was never forgotten, and it was created completely on the basis of need. Since then, it's become better, but it's because we have two separatist groups in Malmö who watch over the question basically.

Here, Julia connects us to what the founders of Collective Effort and Adrian discussed above. She emphasizes the importance of ‘never forgetting’ issues surrounding feminism and gender. When individuals or groups do not constantly consciously attempt to act according to anti-sexist habits, individuals in the extra-parliamentary left can interpret others as falling back into the patterned interactions that reconstruct the patriarchy. However, when individuals interact in a way where they attempt to counteract these inequalities, extra-parliamentary leftists can start to attempt to create anti-sexist community spaces. Yet, even in separatist self-segregation, we find a tension between stability and fluidity. Extra-

parliamentary leftists argue that the habits surrounding anti-sexism should not be allowed to crowd out the other habits of the extra-parliamentary left. Julia, for example, highlights specifically that even separatist groups should engage in all other types of extra-parliamentary politics as well. Similarly, Astrid, another individual with experience in separatist groups, reasons around the issue this way:

Colm: How do you think about separatism and separatist organizing?

Astrid: Separatist organizing is a good method, but it's not the goal. Then it's just hiding the problem, because there are still men, those who you try to separate yourself from. So then it's maybe better to work on a structure where everyone can work together regardless of if you're a man or a woman or anything else. But I think it's a good method, like if you have a discussion, that it can just be women in a group, it can be really strengthening. I think it can be applied at specific times basically, but I think I prefer to be organized in a mixed form today.

Astrid argues that while separatist organizing may be useful instrumentally, it should not become a goal for individuals. Just as anti-fascism should not become the sole focus of extra-parliamentary leftists, neither should anti-sexism. The goal of extra-parliamentary politics instead revolves around finding a balance between these different issues, and creating community spaces, where interactions occur according to an extra-parliamentary pattern, rather than a conventional pattern. However, extra-parliamentary leftists are aware that attempts at self-segregation often fail in terms of gender. While individuals understand this as problematic, and often attempt to find strategies to address these breakdowns, there is vital difference between behaviors where individuals are interpreted as actively violating self-segregation or passively violating self-segregation. Passive violation of an anti-sexist free space can lead to identity interruption (see below), but it is unlikely to lead to identity degradation. However, active violations can set in motion the process through which individuals and groups are denied access to the extra-parliamentary left and stripped of their identity as extra-parliamentary leftists.

At the individual level, the most common behavior that can lead to identity degradation is when men engage in 'uncomradely behavior.' Uncomradely behavior is here a euphemism for domestic or sexual violence. In her study of Danish AFA activists, Christensen (2010, p. 159) discusses situations "in which men in the movement have been violent towards girlfriends or wives." She finds

that “the consequences of violent behavior have been quarantine and exclusion/outing from the community (often for several years)” (Christensen, 2010, p. 159). During my fieldwork, on the rare occasions where individuals were excluded from the extra-parliamentary left, it was always because of this type of uncomradely behavior. Like the individuals in Christensen’s study, these individuals were then unwelcome at demonstrations, parties, lectures, or other extra-parliamentary events, and were encouraged to stay away from the extra-parliamentary left. Information about the behavior was spread and shared between extra-parliamentary groups and leftists and became publicly known. These individuals were no longer recognized as extra-parliamentary leftists. Instead, they were successfully deprived of their identity as extra-parliamentary leftists, no longer members of their extra-parliamentary group or viewed as members of the extra-parliamentary left. Yet, as Garfinkel (1956) highlights, identity degradation processes do not always go as smoothly as they did on these occasions. In these cases, the individuals involved did not protest or contest the identity degradation process. In the past, however, this has not always been the case. Speaking of a similar incident a few years ago, one participant stated ‘*the group we had, it collapsed because of an internal conflict, which was about domestic violence, it was a really traumatic situation*’ (Field notes). When an identity degradation process is contested, its success will depend on the status of the individuals involved. In this previous case, rather than recreating the habits of anti-sexism in the extra-parliamentary left, the contestation instead led to a collapse of these habits and of community spaces.

Domestic and sexual violence are usually interpreted as active violations of the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left. In these cases, behaviors that should belong to the surrounding society, in the eyes of extra-parliamentary leftists, are instead brought into the assumed community spaces of the extra-parliamentary left. When this occurs, individuals must recreate the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left, and check that their assumptions about what comradely behavior means are correct and shared with others. Identity degradation processes are one way to do this. This enables individuals to maintain their habits as extra-parliamentary leftists and maintain ideas about what it means to be a comrade. Speaking of domestic violence, Ludwig, for example, says:

Colm: Do you think it's important to act politically in everyday life?

Ludwig: ...on the other hand, in terms of men's violence against women, I don't think a women beater can be active in my political organization. You have to be able to trust each other as comrades, you have to fulfill certain requirements so that you can trust each other. You can't push others down, it's part of our political idea, we can't do it in a political context, in our group.

Ludwig emphasizes that he wouldn't want to be organized together with a 'women beater', and that there are 'certain requirements' so that he is able to trust others as comrades. Yet, if domestic violence was not addressed in the extra-parliamentary left, it would be difficult to maintain the assumption that this is a feature of comradely behavior. As we see in the story of the group which collapsed, after an active violation of the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left, individuals were unable to reach a new agreement on what comradely participation meant. When these active violations are not dealt with, community spaces are not recreated, but instead extra-parliamentary habits can collapse and dissolve.

While this occurred most often at the individual level in my fieldwork, identity degradation can also occur at the group level. This occurs when certain groups are interpreted as actively promoting ideas that work against the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left. An example of this arose in the events following a speech at Take the Night Back (TNT) in March 2020. TNT is a yearly event in the extra-parliamentary left and usually takes place in connection with the demonstration on International Women's Day. The network *Feminism from Below* organizes both events in Malmö, and like the Revolutionary 1st of May network discussed above, usually consists of several extra-parliamentary groups. In 2020, five groups were a part of the network: SUF Malmö, The Red and Black Collective, Mangla, AFA Malmö, and The Southern Club. Conversely, in 2021, only two groups participated in planning the extra-parliamentary 8th of March, AFA Malmö and SUF Malmö. While the Covid-19 pandemic plays a role in this, a conflict that originates in a speech at the TNT demonstration in 2020 also plays a vital role in the disappearance of certain groups.

TNT differs from other demonstrations that the extra-parliamentary left organizes. As Sandberg and Coe (2020, p. 1044) write, the TNT demonstrations "is traditionally a women-only, night-time, urban protest march against all forms of male violence against women." The demonstration takes place at night, is

separatist, and participants often drink alcohol. It resembles a party more than a traditional demonstration, with loud music, dancing, and bright clothing. Coe and Sandberg (2019, p. 628) describe the 2016 demonstration in Malmö like this:

First, the initial rally began without any previous sign until suddenly the nearly empty square filled with 200 participants in a matter of minutes. Second, the entire march combined fun in the form of socializing and dancing with condemnation conveyed through speeches and chants. When the initial rally got underway, dance music blasted out of loud speakers from a sound system on the back of a truck. The festive energy continued throughout the march merging with angry political chants like ‘Tonight, we take back not only the night, not only the streets, but the whole world.’

TNT is an almost ideal-typical example of a self-segregating event in an attempt to create an anti-sexist community space. However, about two weeks after the TNT demonstration in 2020, Mangla published a text on their Facebook page, with the title *Sexual Exploitation*. In this text, Mangla discusses the usage of the terms sex work and prostitution and argues that individuals should always use the term prostitution. For example, the first paragraph of the text reads:

It should be called by its right name. To use the words ‘sex work’ is nothing but a punch in the stomach to the hundreds of thousands of (mostly) women and children who have been forced into the sex trade through trafficking, alienation, or exclusion. It is also an insult to those who would never call themselves sex workers.

Mangla continues in discussing the TNT demonstration in Malmö a few weeks earlier. Speaking about the demonstration, they write:

...at the demonstration, a speech was held that concerned all those who for different reasons could not participate in the demonstration. The speech was mostly important and good—but it concluded with the phrase: ‘Decriminalize Sex Work.’ Mangla wishes to, as an organizer of this demonstration, distance itself from this opinion. Together with *Inte din hora* (Not your whore) we wish to clarify why our mutual standpoint is entirely different.

Mangla concludes the text in arguing that the legalization of the sex trade would benefit only a small group within prostitution, as well as men who buy sex. Or as they write “*the man. The rapist. Them who buy a body for their own pleasure.*” In

this text, Mangla is careful to note that the speech they are reacting to was ‘important and good.’ However, they argue forcefully that using the language associated with sex work is a violation of the anti-sexist principles of the extra-parliamentary left⁷⁰. Mangla further conflates prostitution with rape and argues that it always relies upon the use of violence. Nonetheless, they do not begin any identity degradation process towards the individual who gave the speech or that individual’s group. Debates surrounding the language of sex work or prostitution can arise in the extra-parliamentary left, particularly when either new groups or new individuals join the movement. However, for the participants I followed, it is not an issue worth discussing. Many of these participants were dismissive of the sex work movement, viewing it as merely another symptom of liberal feminism. Alternatively, some individuals suggested that the increasing use of sex work (rather than prostitution) in Sweden is due to the increasing Americanization of the Swedish left. As one participant suggested, in discussing the increasing prevalence of the term in Sweden, ‘*I think a lot of it comes from things like TikTok and Twitter, and the internet generally. And there it’s almost always Americans talking about these things, and they have a completely different history and understanding*’ (*Field notes*). Extra-parliamentary leftists assume that other extra-parliamentary leftists are against the usage of the terms sex work or sex workers and are against prostitution. Beyond ideological differences, this is also a form of self-segregation from what individuals view as the pervasive influence of liberal feminism, just as in the feminism v. anti-sexism debate discussed above.

However, if we turn to the zine *Books and Bricks*, we find a different perspective. The Red and Black Collective (RBC), one of the organizing groups of TNT and the March 8th demonstration in 2020, published *Books and Bricks*. Two individuals who belonged to RBC published texts in this zine, discussing the prostitution/sex work debate. Each text is a defense of the use of sex work and sex workers and argues explicitly against the use of prostitution and the conflation of prostitution and violence. In rejecting the claim that prostitution always constitutes a form of violence, Ortica (2020, p. 22) argues that “although there is no denial that sex work is linked to patriarchal and capitalist structures in our society, this essentialist narrative is often rejected by sex workers themselves, as well as other feminist and activist circles, on two grounds: firstly, due to the

⁷⁰ Although the use of sex work and advocates of decriminalizing sex work are present in many anti-capitalist movements in the English-speaking world, this is not the case in Sweden.

victimization and stigma it propagates, and secondly, due to the lack of recognition of queer and transgender folks as well as men, who have sold sexual services as labor.” The second text concludes in arguing that activists or leftists who are against the decriminalization or legalization of sex work do not “fight for the safety and security of [their] fellow workers” or “stand on the side of the working class” (Wogasso, 2020, p. 24).

Here, we see a clear example of what Fillieule (2010, p. 10) calls a “rupture of the consensus” assumed amongst extra-parliamentary leftists. In Strauss’s terms, an arena arises around the prostitution/sex work issue within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. A conflict arises around whose understandings surrounding this issue are legitimate and representative of the extra-parliamentary left, and what the ‘comradely’ approach should be. Those who advocate for the use of sex work accuse their opponents of breaking the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left, through not standing on the side of the working class or properly understanding feminism. Conversely, Mangla and other advocates of the prostitution understanding suggest that the others are liberals who do not truly understand socialism or feminism. This conflict continued (and possibly continues) throughout the next year, culminating in the theme of the 8th of March demonstration in 2021, which was ‘*All of Malmö hates johns.*’ However, as I noted above, in 2021 only two groups were still involved with Feminism from Below, AFA Malmö and SUF Malmö. Partly, this is pandemic related. Mangla, for example, went into a period of abeyance during the pandemic. However, I argue that this is also the outcome of the struggle surrounding this issue.

Prior to the 8th of March, Feminism from Below released a text outlining why they chose this theme. In the text, the authors argue that in trying to equate prostitution with other types of labor, proponents of sex work “*disconnect from the patriarchal power structures which make it possible to buy a women’s body*” (Feminism Underifrån, 2021). They further suggest that “*genuine consent cannot be bought, bribed, or convinced- and sex without consent is rape*” (Feminism Underifrån, 2021). The text continues in attempting to clarify that women in prostitution should feel no shame, but that it is instead the capitalist and patriarchal system that bears the shame. The authors contend therefore that it is important that we “*place blame and shame on the perpetrators*” and the text ends in stating “*Let them [the johns] know that when our revolution comes, they should be afraid. Let them know that our streets, our squares, and our bodies belong to us*” (Feminism Underifrån, 2021).

Here, I suggest that we can understand the outcome of this conflict as the outcome of an identity degradation process. In this process, RBC and its allies were denied a place in the extra-parliamentary left, and the understandings RBC advocated for were excluded from the extra-parliamentary left. Since one of the core activities of this social world is demonstrations, and particularly those on International Women's Day and International Workers' Day, denial of a place in the organization of these demonstrations suggests that these groups, ideas, and beliefs are not seen as representative of the extra-parliamentary left. Individuals and groups who advocate for the use of sex work rather than prostitution are denied the ability to claim to represent the extra-parliamentary left. Instead, actors who make these claims are interpreted as actively breaking the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left and bringing a liberal feminist logic into anti-sexist community spaces. Nonetheless, the outcome of this process was likely dependent on the positions of the actors. AFA Malmö and SUF Malmö are two groups with prestigious positions in the extra-parliamentary left, due to both their involvement with aggressive self-segregation and a long history of association and involvement with extra-parliamentary politics. These groups are then able to exclude RBC and proponents of sex work from the 8th of March in Malmö. They even publicly and morally shame these proponents in the announcement of the demonstration.

In doing so, AFA Malmö and SUF Malmö recreate the habits of the extra-parliamentary left, restoring the assumed consensus that previously existed. Using the terms sex work and sex workers is not comradely behavior, but rather something that actors who do not belong to or represent the extra-parliamentary left do. However, it is important to note here that this process never becomes final or fixed. Just as the individuals who suffered identity degradation above may be allowed a place in the extra-parliamentary left again after a period of time, groups may also be invited back in the future. Similarly, habits are never entirely stable, but instead need to be constantly recreated. It is possible that either political or social developments could lead to actors who advocate for sex work becoming representative of the extra-parliamentary left, and AFA Malmö and SUF Malmö instead becoming excluded from the community. Habits are in constant motion. Because they must constantly be recreated in every interaction, community spaces are always inherently fragile and prone to interruption. Acts may always show that agreements that were thought to be shared between extra-parliamentary leftists are not, and situations must then be redefined. When individuals are interpreted as acting in such a way that they actively disrupt the self-segregation of the extra-

parliamentary left, adhering to interactional patterns belonging to the surrounding society rather than the extra-parliamentary left, identity degradation processes can occur. Extra-parliamentary leftists act to deny representation claims and uphold extra-parliamentary habits. It is in terms of gender relations that this process is most fragile in the extra-parliamentary left, and thus identity degradation tends to occur in connection with behaviors interpreted as actively violating the anti-sexist habits of the community.

8.3 The Meeting: Identity Interruption

While identity degradation processes are rare, spectacular, and public events, the recreation of community spaces occurs constantly. When individuals succeed in self-segregating from the surrounding society, individuals can experience a feeling that the extra-parliamentary left exists and intersubjectively confirm the existence of extra-parliamentary habits. In doing so, community spaces come into existence, or interactions where identities and understandings can be confirmed, legitimizing the ways of life of the group. Yet, as the habits of the extra-parliamentary left are deviant in Swedish society, these community spaces are inherently fragile. Interactions can always deny the existence of extra-parliamentary habits, rather than confirming them, and self-segregation can fail. Above, I discussed the successful May 1st demonstration in 2019 as an example of the creation of a community space. I further mentioned that this demonstration occurs due to a long-standing cooperation between different extra-parliamentary groups. These groups often come together to create community spaces, where individuals act in line with extra-parliamentary habits. Yet, as Blumer (1969, p. 18) emphasizes, even in well-established patterns of action, “participants still have to build up their lines of action and fit them to one another through the dual process of designation and interpretation.” Things can always go wrong in interaction, and more broadly, in the process of pursuing collective action. Although the demonstration in 2019 was successful, the organization and planning of the demonstration was beset by problems, ranging from personal conflicts to ideological conflicts to practical issues. Most of these problems occurred at meetings. Here, I will analyze these problems as identity interruptions, or situations where the identity and habits of extra-parliamentary leftists become problematic and must be re-established.

Group meetings are another core activity within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left. Groups exist and establish their existence at meetings. Similarly, individuals become extra-parliamentary leftists at meetings, and maintain and confirm their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists at meetings. Here, we move entirely away from the spectacular to the mundane. Group members usually meet once a week in the extra-parliamentary left, to perform tasks like answering emails, planning new events, evaluating prior events, gossiping, and socializing. Meetings therefore play a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of identities, for individuals, groups, and even the community. When problems arise at meetings, communal identities can become problematic (Paik, 2006). If these identity interruptions are not resolved or individuals cannot find other ways to confirm their identities, it can lead to the disintegration of an extra-parliamentary identity in the short term, or the disintegration of the extra-parliamentary left in the long term.

Let me start with a brief description of the process of organizing the May 1st demonstration. In the early part of the year, usually around February, a group chosen at the previous year's evaluation meeting sends out an email to other groups who may potentially be involved in the planning, inviting them to a meeting. The groups are usually chosen, as one participant put it, '*on the basis of tradition, we collaborate pretty widely. If we were able to choose, we wouldn't work together with all these groups*' (Field notes). After receiving the email, each group that wishes to be involved sends a representative to the first meeting. Representatives from these groups then continue to meet every week or two over the next few months in the lead up to May 1st, settling issues surrounding everything from the time of the demonstration to its theme to how to publicize it. After the demonstration, the group representatives meet for an evaluation meeting, where one group is selected to send the initial coordination email for next year, which will start the process again. In 2019, however, this process became problematic. In the weeks after the demonstration, Ebba reflected on the process of planning the demonstration in the following way:

...there's not so much of a movement anymore, there are not so many left basically, there are a few active groups, but more and more, I think, you have to try to find alliances outside of what used to be the Malmö movement. Sometimes there can be some problems, I wasn't at the May 1st meetings, but I heard they were really argumentative, so there were some differences of opinion ...I don't know, I don't know if there is a movement anymore, it's tragic.

Rather than the planning process succeeding in creating community spaces and strengthening the commitment of individuals to the extra-parliamentary left, we see that Ebba instead suggests that she now wonders if a movement even exists anymore. She notes that individuals at the meetings described them as difficult and ‘argumentative,’ and that there can be problems in the cooperation between the different groups. The major problems at the May 1st meetings arose between individuals from different extra-parliamentary groups. Jämte et al. (2020, p. 24) discuss a frame dispute in the extra-parliamentary left between “those RLLM actors wanting to maintain their distance to reformist actors of the broader left and those who wanted to take a ‘pragmatist’ path.” This dispute is important context for understanding the conflicts at the May 1st meetings. One conflict that arose at the meetings was whether the demonstration should apply for a permit for the demonstration. The more ‘radical’ actors did not think the demonstration should apply for a permit, seeing it as an admission of the state’s legitimacy, while other parts of the community thought that there was no reason not to apply for a permit. It is this conflict that adheres most closely to the frame dispute the authors above identify. However, it is also this conflict that seemed to cause the fewest problems in terms of identity interruptions. Extra-parliamentary leftists understood why the more radical actors wanted to perform the demonstration without a permit, even if they did not agree, waving the dispute away as ‘*classic anarchists*’ or in noting that they ‘*don’t believe in permits either, but it’s not worth not doing it*’ (Field notes). This conflict did not actually lead to any identity interruptions, but was instead interpreted as a normal, reasonable debate to have in the planning of a demonstration. In Polletta’s (2002) terms, it was *deliberative talk*.

However, a dispute that did cause identity interruptions was how individuals at the meetings interpreted each other’s behavior. Meetings in the extra-parliamentary left should follow a certain pattern, or have a certain group style (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003; Lichterman, 2006, 2021). Lichterman (2006, p. 851) defines group style as “a recurrent pattern of interaction that arises from a collective’s taken for granted understandings about how to be a good member.” Discussing the difference between good and bad groups, Sara puts it this way:

Colm: You mentioned bad groups there, so I was wondering what is the difference between good and bad groups?

Sara: I would say that a bad group primarily has a bad structure, a bad internal structure, so that there is a hierarchy or conflicts, that you don't listen to each other, that you have a bad meeting structure, that you don't get anything done, it's a really common problem that you have meetings and then nothing happens...But also there are groups that can't behave themselves, they don't work well together with others...

Sara suggests that bad meetings and groups are those where there is a clear hierarchy and where groups do not get anything done. She also argues that bad groups are those that 'don't work well' with others and where individuals do not listen to each other. In good groups or meetings conversely, individuals get things done, cooperate well, and do not have a hierarchy. To return to what it means to be a comrade, it is important to emphasize that in the extra-parliamentary left individuals should have equal say in decision making and should treat each other as equals. While some individuals may know more than others about how a group works or about issues like applying for a demonstration permit, this type of prestige or expertise differential should not influence meetings and decision making. When groups begin to develop a hierarchy that influences meetings or a group's activities, this is often problematic for extra-parliamentary leftists. Lina, for example, talks about problems with group hierarchy this way:

...it can be a problem, when there's people who hang out with each other outside the group, so there's like a friend gang, it can be a weird mood between those who are in the gang and those who aren't. Or when people take a lot of space, like when those who are really well-read run over those who are not.

Group hierarchy, for Lina, becomes a problem when individuals 'run over' others, or when a 'friend gang' begins to take over a group. While individuals may be friends outside a meeting, at the meeting, they should be comrades, or extra-parliamentary leftists. Discussing her decision to leave one group for another, Tove similarly argues that hierarchy became problematic in her former group:

Colm: How did you decide to join [group name]?

Tove: I joined [group name 1] maybe three years ago, but I think I was still in [group name 2] at the time. But more and more I felt that the way [group name 2] did things didn't fit with what I thought, there was some internal hierarchy that

I didn't feel comfortable with...[and] the internal hierarchy influences the group, basically, like about who gets to talk the most and who gets to set the agenda...

Like Lina, Tove argues that internal hierarchy should not influence a group meeting. All individuals should have an equal chance to talk and to determine the group's agenda and activities. Similarly, decision making should occur on an equal basis. Meetings within the extra-parliamentary left should adhere to what I call a *prefigurative meeting habit*. Polletta (2002, p. 6) defines prefigurative as "a way to describe movement groups whose internal structure is characterized by a minimal division of labor, decentralized authority, and an egalitarian ethos and whose decision making is direct and consensus oriented." While not all groups in the extra-parliamentary left operate through a consensus-based decision-making system (Everything for Everyone, for example, uses voting), all groups and meetings are based on principles of decentralized authority, direct decision making, and egalitarianism. Meetings, and behavior at meetings, should reflect this egalitarian ethos.

The major conflicts at the May 1st meetings in 2019 arose when individuals interpreted or accused others as failing to act in accordance with this prefigurative meeting habit. Specifically, several individuals accused others of attempting to impose their will on the meetings, and of failing to support an egalitarian, democratic decision-making structure. Axel, who attended the meetings, described them this way:

...anarchist groups, we don't try to work together with them, because we don't think we have our political practices in common. Then when we do, like May 1st, there's basically no common connection, and in practice it's really annoying. They are really bad at having a structured meeting and behaving comradely. Really, just practical things...

Meetings, for Axel, are supposed to be structured and places where individuals behaved comradely. When he interprets others as failing to adhere to these principles, he becomes irritated and annoyed. Rather than the achieving intersubjective agreement on appropriate behavior at meetings, Axel experiences intersubjective disagreement. These interactions fail to become community spaces, where Axel can take-for-granted that others at the meetings have the same habits as him. Mats recounts his experiences at the meetings similarly:

This year there have been some problems. Yea maybe you heard? (I nod) It's these anarchists, they don't really understand how democracy should work and use a lot of domination techniques and stuff, and then when you come from a group that actively works against these things, you notice it. At the same time it becomes so weird, such a weird mood when people from other groups sit completely silently or just are, there's something you feel, but that's what domination techniques do, you don't dare to say anything... When you're socialized into a movement where you listen to what others say and think, it becomes a real shock when an organization that has it in them to run over people shows up.

Mats emphasizes a feeling of shock, and that he thought that the meetings had 'such a weird mood.' For Mats, a breach of the prefigurative meeting habit occurs (Garfinkel, 1967). He accuses the anarchists of failing to act in accordance with the democratic, non-hierarchical principles valued in the extra-parliamentary left. Not only do the anarchists fail to understand how to have a productive meeting, in Axel's description, but they also fail to listen to others and attempt to dominate others at the meetings, for Mats. If we return to the description of good and bad groups discussed above, these qualities are precisely the ones named in a description of bad groups and bad meetings. When individuals are interpreted as acting in contravention of the prefigurative meeting habit, they become uncomradely. Rather than becoming comrades, as in identity confirmation, in identity interruption, assumed intersubjective agreement fails, and individuals are accused of acting uncomradely. In the understandings of the 'anarchists' about these meetings, we see a further example of the identity interruption process. Here, it is important to emphasize that I lack first-hand data from these individuals for the reasons discussed in the methods chapter. However, another issue at the May 1st meetings in 2019 was the event text, part of which I quoted above. This text was chosen instead of another text, which the anarchists had written⁷¹. Participants told me that the 'anarchists' felt that the other groups had 'run over' them in choosing the final event text instead of their suggestion and accused the representatives of other groups as acting uncomradely (*Field notes*). A similar process to above appears to be at play here, where the anarchists understood the others as failing to adhere to the prefigurative meeting habit, and not allowing for a democratic decision-making process to take place.

⁷¹ This text can be found here: <https://gatorna.info/threads/saltsjobadsavtalet-ar-dott-klasskrig-nu-2147/>

While individuals may have experienced identity interruptions at these meetings, it is important to emphasize that they did not become identity degradation. Neither side in these conflicts called into question the prefigurative meeting habit, the goals or beliefs of the extra-parliamentary left, or attempted to publicly shame anyone. Instead, individuals were accused as acting uncomradely, rather than as *being* uncomradely. These identity interruptions are occasions where the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left breaks down, and individuals are unable to achieve intersubjective agreement. When this occurs, as I discussed in Chapter 3, individuals have several options. They can choose to adjust their habits and accept that the previously problematic behaviors are in fact behaviors that characterize extra-parliamentary leftists, and in the process, adjust their own identities. However, they can also, as P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991) point out, instead choose to seek out other significant others. In the examples above, we see individuals pursue this strategy, finding interactional identity confirmation through changing interaction partners.

One group attempts to limit their interactions with those they call ‘anarchists’, suggesting that they do not actually have that much in common. Tove leaves one group for another when she experiences the group as becoming too hierarchical. In each case, they could instead have chosen to proceed as before and adjust their habits, or to leave the extra-parliamentary left. Particularly in the absence of other options, they may have chosen to leave. Yet, the social world of the extra-parliamentary is big enough that one group does not have the status as the sole expert legitimators of the world (Strauss, 1978). Tove, instead finds another group that she interprets as more in line with her understanding of the extra-parliamentary left identity. Yet, as Ebba noted above, these identity interruptions can cause groups to begin to consider whether they want to continue to belong to the extra-parliamentary left, or whether they should instead cooperate more with others outside the community.

Nonetheless, in 2019, despite the conflicts and increasingly confrontational tone at the May 1st meetings, a successful demonstration was organized. Barr and Drury (2009, p. 257) argue that “while activists may be defeated and feel disempowered on one level, it seems they also have at their disposal range of strategies to counter these negative feelings.” In this case, extra-parliamentary leftists were able to focus on the end of a demonstration, despite experiencing the organizing of that demonstration as problematic. Individuals valued the continuing existence of the extra-parliamentary more than the disagreements at

the meetings. Identity interruptions are moments when the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left breaks down, and individuals are jolted from their previously assumed agreement about the habits of extra-parliamentary leftists. Individuals often try to reconstruct the habits of the extra-parliamentary left through engaging in different interactions or limiting interactions with those who are seen as acting uncomradely. In the example of the May 1st meetings in 2019, all individuals involved found ways to work together sufficiently to organize a demonstration. Yet, as individuals argued above, because the existence of the extra-parliamentary left is only confirmed at events like demonstrations, the tensions at these meetings remind us of the inherent fragility of community spaces. They must be constantly remade in interaction, and in interaction, things can always go wrong.

Notably, however, the Covid-19 pandemic took hold before the next May 1st could be held. It is thus impossible to know empirically how the process around May 1st would be after the conflicts of 2019. It is not impossible that in the following three years, groups and individuals have reevaluated their relationships to each other, and that the process would occur differently today. Nevertheless, at least in 2019, individuals in the extra-parliamentary left were able to manage these identity interruptions and maintain the existence of the extra-parliamentary left.

8.4 Libertarian Socialists in Capitalist Society

While extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to self-segregate from the patriarchy with varying degrees of success, another system of inequality that extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to escape is capitalism. For the extra-parliamentary left, it is probably accurate to say that the major enemy or opponent of extra-parliamentary leftists is capitalism. All systems of inequality, in the extra-parliamentary analysis, grow out of or are connected to capitalism, including racism, fascism, and sexism. Jämte (2013), for example, argues that a key theoretical development in the 1990s in the extra-parliamentary left was when AFA began to see fascism as a movement that defends and strengthens already existing power structures in society, rather than as an isolated movement. Similarly, in the statement for the 8th of March demonstration in 2019, *Feminism from Below* noted that “all feminism is important, but for us it’s not possible to fight for feminism without class struggle” (Feminism Underifrån, 2019). Autonomous

Organizing argues similarly in a statement on the 8th of March in 2020 that “For us, it’s clear that we need an anti-capitalist, radical feminism that challenges the patriarchal system itself. Capitalism, the patriarchy, and racism are systems that are embedded in each other and without a movement that understands that they depend on each other and whose goal is to build radical, solidaric opposition, we’re not going to succeed” (Autonom Organising, 2020). In these analyses, feminist and anti-fascist struggles both require an anti-capitalist struggle. This combined struggle and understanding forms the basis for extra-parliamentary politics, and thus, extra-parliamentary habits. However, because extra-parliamentary leftists view capitalism as dominating social life, it is challenge for socialist individuals and a socialist community to attempt to live out an anti-capitalist lifestyle. Adam puts it this way:

You can be in a structure and be against its functions. I work even though I’m against wage labor. You have to, or you can think that you have to within some structure.

Even though Adam argues that he does not believe in wage labor, he does not see how he could live without engaging in it. He develops this argument further at a later point in the interview:

Colm: How important do you think it is to be political in everyday life?

Adam: Some of the things we think politically describe why it’s unacceptable to behave in some ways, then you can’t behave that way to each other because you don’t want to socialize with someone who behaves unacceptably. But if I think there shouldn’t be money in society, that doesn’t mean that I don’t think that I should pay my share when I eat with friends at a restaurant. I don’t think I can just run away and say there shouldn’t be any money and run away so that the others have to pay the bill. Or if you’re against Apple’s slave labor in Asia, it doesn’t mean that you can’t have an iPhone. I don’t think it’s important in that sense...

Adam highlights two important points here. First, he argues that it is essentially impossible for him to live according to his political beliefs in today’s society. If he wants to, for example, eat at a restaurant, he has to use money. In conversations with participants, this is a recurring argument. The surrounding society does not allow extra-parliamentary leftists to live according to truly socialist principles, in their view. Yet, at the same time, while Adam suggests that one cannot lead an

entirely socialist life, Adam emphasizes that it is still ‘unacceptable’ to behave in certain ways. Above, I demonstrated that domestic and sexual violence are examples of unacceptable behavior in terms of anti-sexism. In terms of socialism, Olivia discusses unacceptable behaviors like this:

Colm: Do you think it’s important to be political in everyday life?

Olivia: I think there’s a border, I’ve thought about it a lot, that there is, you can’t be a perfect person. We are not liberals for a reason, we don’t think that the individual can change things, but it’s going a bit far if people buy apartments just to sell them, to earn money. There’s some kind of limit, as a socialist, you shouldn’t have domestic labor, you can’t buy labor. That’s not socialist, but I also don’t think the individual by themselves can change things... there’s a limit to what a person can do, but there’s also a limit to how liberal a person can be in their actions. I’m really sick of people trying to be a perfect person, you can just be a little decent, basically. Maybe you don’t always buy ecological, but you do when you have money...

For Olivia, it is unavoidable that individuals will, at times, act in what she calls a liberal manner. However, again, she emphasizes that there are limits to what type of behavior socialists can partake in. We see here a similarity to the discussion above surrounding anti-sexism—while there is an acknowledgement that the entrenched interactional patterns of the surrounding society may be inescapable, this does not mean that individuals should not try to escape them and set limits upon what is or is not acceptable. Olivia, in describing what is ok, argues that individuals should ‘just be a little decent, basically.’ Decency involves not only buying ecological produce or refusing to have domestic labor, but also, I argue, acting comradely. Through acting in a comradely manner, individuals create community spaces. These spaces must be not only anti-fascist and anti-sexist, but also socialist or anti-capitalist. Here, I argue that socialist habits in the extra-parliamentary left revolve around specific understandings of subjectivity and place. When individuals interpret interactions as anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and socialist community spaces arise, generating feelings of belonging and community and allowing individuals to feel at home.

Jämte et al. (2020, p. 22) argue that the collective identity of the extra-parliamentary left in the current period has focused on centering anti-capitalist campaigns around “conflicts over the privatization of public spaces, the shortage of rentable housing, the precarization of work, etc.” I agree with this analysis but

extend it here to what this means for extra-parliamentary habits. Three activists from Everything for Everyone help us to connect these broader anti-capitalist campaigns to everyday interactions in a text analyzing the city as place for political struggle. In the text, they focus on what they view as the logic of capitalist places⁷². The authors write “For the powerful, the only rooms worth having are those rooms whose profits and values are measurable. For power, non-places are in fact places” (K., K., & M., 2020, p. 109). The authors argue that capitalism creates a society of non-places, or “places where no one feels at home...non-places are the spaces where we never live our lives, but only run errands, or pass by on the way to somewhere else. Non-places are things like malls and workplaces, but also highways” (K. et al., 2020, p. 105). Places, on the other hand, are “the lived rooms, where we feel at home, where we don’t just pass by physically and where we constantly find ourselves in our thoughts. Places are with us and we are with places” (K. et al., 2020, p. 105). Yet, in the text, the idea of place remained unclear to me, and particularly about questions surrounding which rooms or spaces are places. After reading the text, I attended a conversation with two of the authors where they discussed the text. The talk, which lasted about 30 minutes, focused largely on how Malmö is being transformed into a city of non-places, in their view, with fewer and fewer public spaces, and areas where individuals can spend time without spending money. In the talk, and in the text, it is very clear what non-places are. However, even after the talk, it remained unclear to me what places were to the authors. After the talk, I asked a question wondering if the two authors could define place. One answered, beginning with a laugh, ‘*of course you academics want us to define our concepts*’ prior to saying ‘*but you can’t define it, you just know it. It’s just somewhere where you feel at home*’ (Field notes).

Here, I argue that one way of understanding the emphasis and focus the authors put on place can be understood in reference to self-segregation and community spaces. In community spaces, members of the extra-parliamentary left feel at home, as they self-segregate from the surrounding society, and interact according

⁷² Place is originally a concept developed in cultural geography. The concepts of place and non-place are most prominently developed in the work of Marc Augé and Yi-Fu Tuan. Merriman (2009, p. 16), in an overview of Augé’s work, argues that “non-places are characterized by a certain detachment between an individual and the space s/he traverses, as they are rendered passive and become ‘merely a gaze.’” Places, conversely, are “familiar, localized, historic, organic and meaning to [their] occupants” (Merriman, 2009, p. 16). This is not the same as the use of place in Everything for Everyone’s text, which has its roots more in the work of David Harvey.

to extra-parliamentary habits. Individuals confirm that others share their views, ideas, and goals, and that others see them as they see themselves. Extra-parliamentary politics, then, revolves around creating these spaces. Socialism, in this sense, is clearly more than an economic alternative to capitalism. Socialism, understood here as a combination of the anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist habits that define the extra-parliamentary left, encompasses a different way of life to extra-parliamentary leftists. In a capitalist way of life, individuals do not feel at home, consisting of places which individuals merely pass through. Socialism, conversely, encompasses a way of life where individuals are at home, with places and people which individuals are committed to. Rasmus, for example, in discussing what he views as the problems with capitalism, contrasts living in capitalism with how he imagines living in socialism:

...[socialism] is about living with a feeling of a collective, whatever happens to the person next to me is just as important as what happens to me. And yea that there is less focus on money and economic growth, and people get more time to hang out and not work but do other things which could be work but which they can chose to a much greater degree, and which would be more sustainable for our planet. Yea, that's basically the general idea...

In socialism, individuals have time to 'hang out' and individuals are committed to and care about each other. Individuals can choose what they wish to do, and Rasmus emphasizes that individuals live with 'a feeling of a collective'—or a feeling that they are not alone. Alva, discussing her relationship with her partner, similarly argues that acting as a socialist means acting according to a different set of habits than capitalists:

Colm: Is it important for you that your partner has leftist values?

Alva: Really important, I think. I don't think we would be together if we didn't share the same basic values...I think that an important part of our relation is that is that we have the same view of the world, it would be really hard for me to be together with someone who wasn't a socialist. Because it's so basic, I think, for how one sees other people and injustice, I mean, I think it's important... always when I meet new people, when you're on parental leave you always meet new people, and I met some Italians who I started to hang out with, and everyone just happens to be leftist. I think socialists are just nicer, always when I meet someone who I think is really nice, in the end, they're always a socialist (laughs).

Alva, like Rasmus, does not necessarily highlight economics in her understanding of socialism, although thoughts about injustice and work are clearly present. Rather, Alva argues that socialists are ‘just nicer.’ Socialism, here, encompasses a way of living and a way of viewing the world and other people, which Alva argues is ‘so basic.’ Olivia above noted that socialism involves just being decent. However, for each of these individuals, niceness or decency involves a specific way of acting in the world, characterized by extra-parliamentary habits. Similarly, in the text above, places are defined through feelings, of being at home and of belonging. When individuals act according to extra-parliamentary habits, and create community spaces, it is these feelings that arise. However, for extra-parliamentary leftists, this is only possible through self-segregation. When individuals succeed in self-segregating from the surrounding society, individuals can interact where they take-for-granted that others share extra-parliamentary habits, and act in the ‘usual’ way a socialist acts (Schutz, 1944). Self-segregation enables extra-parliamentary leftists to protect the community’s habits from interruption or breach and allows interactions which create community spaces to take place. Yet, this self-segregation is precarious, and these habits are constantly vulnerable. Schutz (1944, p. 502) argues that thinking as usual can only occur and continue to occur when “neither the systems of recipes as schemes of interpretation and expression nor the underlying basic assumptions...are our private affair, but that they are likewise accepted and applied by our fellow-men.” As I have highlighted in this chapter, this intersubjective assumption easily becomes problematic in the extra-parliamentary left. Whether due to passive interruptions of behavior interpreted as belonging to the surrounding society or active violations of extra-parliamentary habits, the community of the extra-parliamentary left is fragile.

In an essay relating Schutz’s thought to the Robert Musil’s novel *The Man Without Qualities*, P. Berger (1970) explores some of the reasons for this fragility. In the novel, the main character (Ulrich) and his sister (Agathe) attempt to live in an alternative reality, or what the novel refers to as ‘the other condition.’ P. Berger (1970, p. 357, emphasis original), echoing Schutz, posits “one can only exist within *this* reality, by suspending doubts about *it*.” Berger argues further that due to the alternative’s reality distance from the dominant or conventional reality, it is removed from the massive reality confirmations of everyday life, it is *more* susceptible to disintegration...therefore *more* in need of a determined suspension of doubt” (P. Berger, 1970, p. 357, emphasis original). In terms of the extra-

parliamentary left, everyday events and interactions work against extra-parliamentary leftists, adhering to a capitalistic and patriarchal pattern, rather than the socialist habits promoted and shared within this community. Community spaces are the only places where individuals can assume that others share their habits, and where individuals can confirm the existence of the extra-parliamentary left.

P. Berger (1970, p. 360) further notes that “ideas require social resonance to attain and retain their plausibility... it is in conversation with others that an ordered reality is built up and kept going.” Berger argues that one reason for the fragility of Ulrich and Agathe’s attempt to live in another reality relates to the fact that it is only this relationship, which serves to maintain the plausibility of the other reality⁷³. For extra-parliamentary leftists, the plausibility of the extra-parliamentary left is not fragile as the worldview Ulrich and Agathe attempt to maintain. However, this is solely dependent on the number of interactions and relations individuals have with other extra-parliamentary leftists where they can confirm that extra-parliamentary habits are intersubjectively shared. Without the big events of May 1st and March 8th, the community would cease to exist, but similarly, without the repeated meetings and identity confirmations that occur on a daily basis, the community would also cease to exist. On the individual level, Passy and Giugni (2000) demonstrate that an activist identity depends on the ability of individuals to continue to interact as activists, even in other life spheres apart from the solely political. For extra-parliamentary leftists, training clubs like Collective Effort are a means of tying life-spheres together, while individuals like Alva can confirm their identities and the existence of the extra-parliamentary left in their relationships with their partners. P. Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 144) argue that “the most important procedure” for the protection of a deviant community is “the limitation of all significant relationships to fellow-members of the sub-society.” For extra-parliamentary leftists, this means engaging in self-segregation to attempt to construct a socialist community, and spaces where individuals can feel at home. Creating these community spaces becomes a goal of extra-parliamentary politics, and a measure of success. Or as Sofie puts it, in discussing the best parts of her involvement with the extra-parliamentary left:

⁷³ This in some ways echoes Berger and Luckmann’s thoughts on institutionalization, which can only occur with more than two actors (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, pp. 74-75).

The best is the social life you get. You do it because it's important, but you also get so much fun out of it in the form of friends and really important people you meet, and the camaraderie...and then I have a place I can be and feel good, and feel safe, and feel at home.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

In the previous chapter, I argued that the process of joining the extra-parliamentary was contingent, and that individuals could easily have taken other political paths, even within the general leftist movement. In this chapter, I have argued that remaining an extra-parliamentary leftist is similarly contingent. Events can, and often do, interrupt the smooth functioning of repeated attempts at creating joint action. To manage the inherent threats to and tensions within the extra-parliamentary left, extra-parliamentary leftists engage in self-segregation. Through self-segregation, individuals attempt to protect extra-parliamentary habits and identities from the surrounding society. When this succeeds, individuals create community spaces, or interactions where they feel at home and can confirm the existence of the extra-parliamentary left.

In aggressive self-segregation, extra-parliamentary leftists argue that violent anti-fascist tactics allow them to create space for leftist individuals to interact. Without a willingness to use violence, individuals argue that it would be impossible for the community to exist. Yet, while violence may help to create the community, it also has the potential to harm it. Interactions which are interpreted as following a logic of domination, whether regarding violence or gender relations, can be interpreted as an active violation of the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left. When this happens, a process of identity degradation can take place. In identity degradation, individuals lose their identity as community members, and are denied access to the spaces where the community exists. For extra-parliamentary leftists, these processes take place most often after violation of the anti-sexist habits of the community, as the extra-parliamentary left struggles to escape from the patriarchal patterns of the surrounding society.

However, in the broader struggle to escape the surrounding society, identity interruptions can also occur. Rather than active violations, here individuals are interpreted as acting in an uncomradely manner and failing to adhere to the comradely nature of the extra-parliamentary left. Nonetheless, it is more common

within the extra-parliamentary left that interactions achieve identity confirmation. When this happens, individuals feel at home as socialists. Socialism, within the extra-parliamentary left, is not merely an anti-capitalist economic system, but also a habitual way of acting in the world. Socialist spaces and interactions should follow an egalitarian, anti-hierarchical pattern where individuals are committed to each other. The desired end of the extra-parliamentary left is then the creation of a society consisting of these community spaces. Yet, the community spaces of the extra-parliamentary left remain constantly vulnerable to setback, interruptions, and disintegration in everyday interactions, and must be constantly recreated by extra-parliamentary leftists. The accomplishment of a community space cannot be taken-for-granted. Self-segregation, for the extra-parliamentary left, is never final, but remains an ongoing process vulnerable to breaches. During my field work, the extra-parliamentary left often dealt successfully with these breaches and recreated community spaces. However, the instability of the habits of the extra-parliamentary left are an inherent feature of a deviant or marginalized community, and thus the potential for community collapse remains always present.

9 Conclusion: The Pursuit of Community

On the 9th of February 2022, the Swedish government and the Swedish Public Health Agency lifted almost all restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. On the 8th of March 2022, the first extra-parliamentary demonstration without restrictions for almost exactly two years took place. To mark International Women's Day, extra-parliamentary leftists gathered at Möllevångstorget and listened to speeches prior to marching through the surrounding streets. Around 400 participants attended the demonstration. The mood in the demonstration was enthusiastic and jovial, with the participants glad to be back on the streets, confirming and demonstrating the existence of the extra-parliamentary left for themselves, and for others. One speaker emphasized the importance of meetings and interactions, reminding the participants of the value of extra-parliamentary spaces or spaces where extra-parliamentary leftists '*can be [themselves]*' (*Field notes*). As we walked through the streets of Malmö, I was struck by how similar this demonstration was to ones I had attended in the early days of my fieldwork, with many of the same participants, chants, and routines. The extra-parliamentary left, it appeared, had weathered the challenges of the pandemic.

I began this dissertation in describing three extra-parliamentary activities that took place in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Just like those activities, this demonstration in 2022 was also considered a success, invoking feelings of joy, belonging, and commitment in the participants. Although not all of the same individuals who traveled to Gothenburg, played brännboll, and protested against AFS were present at the 8th of March in 2022, many of them were. For some of those who weren't present, parenthood was the reason while for others it was a move to another city. Yet, almost no individuals stayed away because they had left the extra-parliamentary left, or because they no longer viewed the goals of the extra-parliamentary as desirable. Rather, many of the individuals from 2017 had

continued to maintain their participation, commitment, and identities within the social world of the extra-parliamentary left.

In this dissertation, I set out to explore and analyze the activities of this social world that inspire such dedication and commitment, even in the face of a global pandemic and a seeming lack of success, as Swedish politics continues to move rightwards. Throughout the preceding chapters, I have argued that understanding both the activities of the extra-parliamentary left and the feelings these activities evoke requires us to examine the everyday interactions which extra-parliamentary leftists engage in. In studying the extra-parliamentary left with this principle, I have demonstrated that the actions of extra-parliamentary left cannot truly be classified as either traditional social movement activity or as subcultural activity. Instead, I have conceptualized these activities as a politics of community. Studying extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community allows us to better understand both why individuals devote so much time and energy to utopic goals and how individuals maintain this commitment, even within a stigmatized community. For extra-parliamentary leftists, the pursuit of community spaces can become a goal in itself, as individuals attempt to find and create a home within a society they feel they do not belong in. Yet, this pursuit often becomes problematic, as individuals find themselves unable to escape the surrounding social democratic society and deeply entrenched interactional patterns. Nonetheless, this pursuit motivates individuals to continue to spend their time engaged in extra-parliamentary politics, as they attempt to create an expanding network of places where they can be themselves.

9.1 Extra-Parliamentary Politics as a Politics of Community

In conceptualizing extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community, I have explored the social world of the extra-parliamentary left and examined not only how individuals join this social world, but also how they maintain it. The extra-parliamentary left took shape in a specific Swedish social democratic society. When studying Swedish politics, the influence of the social democratic heritage is inescapable. As I have demonstrated in this study, Sweden's social democratic past is also inescapable when acting politically in Sweden. When we discuss the extra-

parliamentary left as a radical or stigmatized political actor, we must therefore examine this radicality or stigma in the context in which it arises. To further examine how the extra-parliamentary left becomes a stigmatized actor, the first research question for this study was *how do extra-parliamentary leftists acquire stigma and interact in broader societal arenas?*

To answer this question, I first explored the surrounding Swedish society in which extra-parliamentary leftists grew up, study, and work. Here, I demonstrated that extra-parliamentary leftists often are neither unable nor disqualified from passing in Swedish society (Goffman, 1963/1990). Many of the participants in this study are aware of the dominant norms surrounding Swedish politics and acting in Swedish society, and are capable of not only passing, but even thriving within the broader society. Stigma, in the extra-parliamentary left, arises not through a process of ascription, but through a process of achievement (Mankoff, 1971). Extra-parliamentary leftists often achieve stigma through a process of self-stigmatization (Lipp, 1977). Characterizing the surrounding society, and specifically reformist leftist movements like SAP or VP, as unwilling to disrupt or challenge the societal order, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to demonstrate that these movements fail to understand reality, and that it is reformists, rather than revolutionaries, who should be stigmatized. These attempts to achieve stigma allow the extra-parliamentary left to become a distinct and recognizable group, as both extra-parliamentary leftists and other political actors view the extra-parliamentary left as a different type of political actor. When extra-parliamentary leftists then interact with other political actors in broader arenas, they often pursue three different types of self-stigmatization: provocative, ecstatic, and exhibitionist.

In interactions in the social democratic arena, with actors like SAP or LO, extra-parliamentary leftists use provocative self-stigmatization to attempt to force a reaction from these organizations, where they will demonstrate that they are not truly on the side of the Swedish working class, but instead on the side of the employers or the bourgeois. Similarly, through ecstatic self-stigmatization, extra-parliamentary leftists use the label of 'violence-affirming extremists', which they cannot ignore in identity construction (Strauss, 1959/1977), to create a distinctive collective identity. Rather than stigmatization and delegitimization, the police and other state actors authenticate the identity of the extra-parliamentary left, as a radical, dangerous movement. Finally, in exhibitionist self-stigmatization, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to demonstrate the differences between the extra-parliamentary left and the Left Party, despite increased cooperation and crossover.

In this process, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to remind VP that they are on the same side, and should be loyal to each other, rather than loyal to the surrounding Swedish society and political system. Yet, each of these processes remains dependent on interactional confirmation. When, for example, police officers cease to treat the extra-parliamentary left as dangerous, extra-parliamentary leftists must find new ways to achieve distinctiveness and recognition as a different type of political actor.

However, to become an extra-parliamentary leftist, individuals must learn to recognize the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left as desirable, rather than as delegitimizing. The second research question in this dissertation therefore analyzed the socialization process into the extra-parliamentary left, examining *how and why do individuals become extra-parliamentary leftists?* I demonstrated that this process often begins early in an individual's life, as individuals grow up in environments characterized by significant others with leftist habits. For many of these individuals, a generally leftist orientation becomes natural and taken-for-granted (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973), and their choice of political involvement revolves more around which type of leftist they should be, rather than which type of political views they will hold. However, few individuals join the extra-parliamentary left directly. Instead, I have shown that individuals often pass through orbiting social worlds first, such as the punk subculture or an institutional political youth organization. In these orbiting social worlds, individuals begin to encounter extra-parliamentary leftist habits, in interaction and participation in the social world's activities. In these activities, individuals learn to see the activities of the extra-parliamentary left as desirable, fun, and fascinating, attracted by the distinctiveness of the extra-parliamentary left in contrast to other political organizations or the surrounding society. Influenced by a developing moral tension (Lofland & Stark, 1965), intrigues (Prus & Grills, 2003), and social ties, individuals join an extra-parliamentary leftist group, and are socialized more thoroughly into extra-parliamentary leftists habits. In this process, individuals develop intimate relations with other extra-parliamentary leftists, experiencing a sense of shared fate and becoming committed not only to the goals of the extra-parliamentary left, but also to each other. Extra-parliamentary habits become natural and taken-for-granted, and individuals identify as extra-parliamentary leftists.

I also investigated how the experiences and taken-for-granted assumptions of extra-parliamentary leftists continue to influence the recruitment processes of the

extra-parliamentary left today. As individuals, extra-parliamentary leftists are not responsible for convincing others of their political views or recruiting other individuals into the movement. Instead, the actions of the community of the extra-parliamentary left are seen to demonstrate the distinctiveness and radicality of the extra-parliamentary left, inciting change not only in individuals but in society. It is the display of an alternative that allows other individuals and societal actors to experience that ‘another world is possible.’ However, links between the extra-parliamentary left and surrounding social worlds appear to have weakened. Particularly, as extra-parliamentary leftists view potential future members as young, subcultural individuals, the extra-parliamentary left has struggled to attract new members and become an aging community.

At the same time, many of the individuals currently involved in the extra-parliamentary left have remained committed to their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists and the activities of the extra-parliamentary for over 10 years. The third research question therefore looked at the process of the maintenance and recreation of the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, exploring *how do individuals handle threats, tensions, and denials of their identities as extra-parliamentary leftists?* In Chapter 8, I showed that extra-parliamentary leftists pursue a strategy of self-segregation (Becker, 1963/1997) to create space for interactions where identity confirmations can occur. Through aggressive and relational self-segregation, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to remove themselves from the interactional pattern of the surrounding society. In doing so, individuals can interact with others who share similar extra-parliamentary habits and not only authenticate their identities, but even confirm the existence of the extra-parliamentary left. Through these interactions, individuals become comrades, demonstrating their commitment to the values of the extra-parliamentary left.

However, the extra-parliamentary left’s self-segregation can often encounter problems. Particularly in attempts to escape the patriarchy, extra-parliamentary leftists can interpret others as failing to adhere to the anti-sexist habits of the community, and instead actively violating the habits of the extra-parliamentary left. When this occurs, a process of identity degradation can be set in motion. Through the identity degradation process, individuals reaffirm their commitment to the habits of the extra-parliamentary left and reconfirm that others share their understandings of what type of behavior the extra-parliamentary left promotes. However, not all violations of the self-segregation of this community lead to

identity degradation. Instead, when individuals are interpreted as acting in an uncomradely manner, identity interruption can occur. In identity interruption, individuals are jolted from the natural attitude and must reestablish a shared definition of the situation. Individuals often solve this problem through limiting interactions with those who they believe act uncomradely, or through changing significant others within the extra-parliamentary left by, for example, joining a different group.

Nonetheless, when interactions proceed smoothly, identity confirmations occur. Through identity confirmation, community spaces arise, or interactions where individuals feel at home, experiencing a sense of intimacy with the others who are involved. In extra-parliamentary community spaces, individuals take-for-granted that others share extra-parliamentary habits, and individuals interact in what they perceive as an egalitarian, anti-hierarchical manner.

Taken together, these processes lead to the creation of something individuals call extra-parliamentary politics. As I noted in the introduction, I did not choose to call the extra-parliamentary left a radical political actor, suggesting that this is an empirical question, rather than a conceptual one. Extra-parliamentary politics at times becomes a form of radical politics. Individuals use violence or view violence as legitimate, arguing that the extra-parliamentary left only exists due to aggressive self-segregation. Yet, I have argued that rather than violence, the radicality of the extra-parliamentary left lies in its willingness to violate accepted patterns of interaction in the Swedish political arena. Individuals strike, seek conflict rather than cooperation, and aim to disrupt social order to achieve distinctiveness and attempt to turn a mirror on the surrounding society to force SAP, LO, and other organizations to reveal what extra-parliamentary leftists view as their hypocrisy. Extra-parliamentary leftists believe that this demonstration of a different way of life or different way of doing politics can inspire change in individuals and society.

However, extra-parliamentary politics are not always radical politics. In terms of organizational culture, political paths, or everyday life, actions are not always spectacular or distinct. Extra-parliamentary politics in Sweden remains firmly Swedish. Individuals often have a complex relationship to Sweden's political history, acknowledging that, at times, Swedish social democracy has improved their lives and even today continues to allow extra-parliamentary politics to occur. Rather than radical, many habits of the extra-parliamentary left are instead conventional. Even when we consider a core activity of extra-parliamentary

politics like demonstrations, Wennerhag (2017b) points out that demonstrations are neither unusual nor uncommon in Swedish politics while the movement society thesis (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998) similarly argues that demonstrations are a conventional political action today. While certain demonstrations may become radical, the act of demonstrating in itself can hardly be considered so. Extra-parliamentary habits are clearly linked to and develop from common political actions in Sweden. Engaging in extra-parliamentary politics means neither entirely rejecting conventional Swedish political habits nor creating entirely new habits. Rather, it is the mix of conventional and radical habits that make the extra-parliamentary left distinct, and for individuals who join, desirable.

While extra-parliamentary politics does not occur disconnected from the broader Swedish political context, extra-parliamentary leftists act politically in a broader variety of contexts than we tend to examine in studying political action. Extra-parliamentary politics is not always public, directed towards the state or state actors, or aimed at clear goals. In everyday interaction, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to challenge the 'big structures' of societal organization, endeavoring to create spaces removed from the patriarchy or capitalism. Individuals engage in extra-parliamentary politics continuously, attempting to demonstrate to themselves and others that the extra-parliamentary left exists. Extra-parliamentary politics can encompass all interactions, but particularly, interactions with other extra-parliamentary leftists are political actions. Studying this form of politics, then, demands that we broaden our definitions of politics, and examine the mundane and the everyday. For these reasons, I have argued that extra-parliamentary politics is best conceptualized as a politics of community. The extra-parliamentary left is neither truly a subculture nor a social movement conceptually, but rather a group which engages in a specific form of political action, pursuing the creation of community spaces. In demonstrating the existence of this distinctive community, extra-parliamentary leftists attempt to change the social organization of society to a world in which interactional patterns are socialist, rather than capitalist or patriarchal. Extra-parliamentary politics, then, is best conceptualized a politics of community.

9.2 The Instability of Community

Examining extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community further allows us to study the accomplishment of stability in a social world. A politics of community is never finished or final. Like Lichterman's (2021, p. 163) communities of identity, "successes are never definite" in a politics of community. Failures, however, can be. Interactions can always go wrong. As Schutz (1945, p. 372) notes, even in our most intimate relations, "there is, of course, no certainty, but just a mere chance, that such a re-establishment and continuation" of intimacy will occur every time we interact. In extra-parliamentary politics, as I have demonstrated, the self-segregation of the extra-parliamentary left remains unstable and fragile. Actions often interrupt the recreation of community spaces, as individuals dispute the correct interpretations of comradely behavior or behave in a manner that denies the existence of the extra-parliamentary left, rather than confirming it. Extra-parliamentary leftists must continuously address these interruptions and find ways to maintain an interactional pattern that challenges that of the surrounding society. If these attempts at recreation were to fail, or individuals were to become discouraged, the extra-parliamentary left would cease to exist, at least in its current guise.

Yet, a politics of community also emphasizes the importance of political and societal context. The extra-parliamentary left, as I have argued, developed at a specific time, in a specific place. As I discussed in Chapter 7, the organizational culture of the extra-parliamentary left has its roots firmly in the institutional world of Sweden. Sweden, however, is changing. As Therborn (2018) argues, the social democratic hegemony in Sweden has likely been broken. Although SAP continues to lead the government, and remains the largest party in Sweden, SAP today bears little resemblance to its earlier predecessors. More importantly, at least the participants in this study argue that the next generation in Sweden is growing up in a different Sweden. The participants in this study suggest that they were the last Swedish generation to grow up in the old Sweden, socialized into a specific organizational culture and set of social democratic habits. Extra-parliamentary leftists point out that they are unsure whether the young people of Sweden today view their practices as desirable, or whether they would prefer something different. At this point, it is important to highlight that it is difficult to know whether these perceptions of Swedish society are accurate, or whether they are traditional complaints of an older generation. If, as I suggested in Chapter 6, everyday life

for many of the participants in this study takes place in a visibly social democratic context, at least Sernhede, Thörn, and Thörn (2016, p. 158) suggest that neoliberal policies in Sweden “are now clearly visible on the ground, vividly written into the starkly contrasting streets and buildings of the urban landscape, which is sharply divided into wealthy, corporate, bureaucratic central-city districts and impoverished outskirts.” Everyday life growing up in Sweden appears to have changed.

However, in either case, we can also consider what the participants identify through what Mannheim (1927/1969) refers to as the problem of generations. As he notes, belonging to a specific generation predisposes individuals to “a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action” and creates “a tendency pointing towards certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought” (Mannheim, 1927/1969, pp. 168-169). As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, extra-parliamentary habits are inherently connected and at times, formed in opposition to conventional Swedish habits. For the participants in this study, extra-parliamentary habits were different to the habits they grew up with, but they remained familiar, and became desirable for the participants. In a new generation, if they are no longer socialized into social democratic habits, extra-parliamentary habits may not appear desirable and familiar, but rather strange, weird, or confusing. As James (1907/1997b, p. 101) argues, when acquiring new habits, we nonetheless “[preserve] the older stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leaves possible.” If individuals no longer receive the same primary socialization as extra-parliamentary leftists did, then the habits of the extra-parliamentary left are unlikely to be familiar or become attractive, fascinating, and desirable. This, then, may have less to do with the extra-parliamentary left and more to do with the development of new generational styles, in Mannheim’s words.

However, another area of instability for the extra-parliamentary left regards the rightwards shift in Swedish politics. To put it simply, the extra-parliamentary left has become more deviant and marginalized as the political winds have shifted. In Chapter 5, I highlighted how Swedish politics, and particularly SAP, has increasingly moved rightwards on both economic and social issues. Individuals are less likely to encounter extra-parliamentary ideas in society. I demonstrated in Chapter 7 that without encountering extra-parliamentary ideas, individuals do

not become extra-parliamentary leftists. In the current Swedish political debate, individuals are not likely to meet extra-parliamentary ideas and opinions. Similarly, as the extra-parliamentary left has become smaller, the distinctive actions of the extra-parliamentary left have become fewer. Wennerhag and Jämte (2019) have shown that there are fewer spectacular demonstrations occurring in Sweden. Individuals, in either the conventional political arena, or on the streets, are less likely to encounter the extra-parliamentary left.

Partly due to difficulties with recruitment, and partly due to the changing political situation in Sweden, some groups in the extra-parliamentary left have gone so far as to declare the extra-parliamentary left dead. With this, they do not mean that they are no longer committed to the same goals, or that all extra-parliamentary activities should or have ceased, but rather that the extra-parliamentary left must change. Just as society changes, they argue that the extra-parliamentary left must change along with it to remain relevant. One activist, writing in *Everything for Everyone's* magazine, puts it this way:

This [change] will require that we betray ourselves. We must betray ourselves through sacrificing the principles which belong to our movement, and which we have made our own through our participation. But, most of all, we must betray our enemies through refusing to participate in the political dynamic which has been established as the rules of the game in the autonomous left's repertoire of conflict—between demonstrator and police, autonomy and parties, movement and media, fascist and anti-fascist, and not least between us as a political force and the people we want to engage in our movement. Only through breaking these dynamics can we explore the possibilities to create something new.

(Kalle, 2021)

The specific habits of the extra-parliamentary left, in this understanding, may have been appropriate and desirable in a prior political situation. However, individuals argue that if the extra-parliamentary left remains fixated on previous ideas and tactics, then it will develop into a slowly dwindling subculture. Instead, the extra-parliamentary left, in this argument, must open itself to new ideas, repertoires, and actions to survive and remain pertinent. Whether this involves moving towards more traditional social movement activity, borrowing actions from other contexts, or finding new allies is difficult to say. Nonetheless, these comments and analyses highlight the need to find a balance between stability and fluidity in a politics of community. Without this balance, extra-parliamentary politics

transforms into either subcultural activity or a non-distinctive social movement. Analyzing extra-parliamentary politics as a politics of community reminds us about the indeterminacy of social worlds. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the extra-parliamentary left is a distinctive political actor with specific habits. However, as Swedish society changes, a politics of community reminds us that this does not have to be the case. A politics of community is never final, but instead, remains always in the making.

9.3 The Future of Community

The extra-parliamentary left in Sweden appears to stand at something of a crossroads. Coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the questions surrounding the extra-parliamentary left are many. During the pandemic, several of the groups named in this dissertation went into abeyance or ceased to exist, as the lack of face-to-face meetings and lack of extra-parliamentary activities appeared to make it difficult for individuals to maintain their commitment. At the same time, Everything for Everyone appears to have begun to cooperate with the Left Party more, rather than other extra-parliamentary groups, and in recent government reports, is no longer classified as a 'violence-affirming organization'. Whether the social world of the extra-parliamentary left will continue to exist is an open question. However, this question can only be answered as events unfold, and through future research.

I therefore want to conclude this dissertation through returning to the politics of community of concept, and exploring some of its conceptual advantages, and particularly, what this implies for the study of political action. Examining political action through the politics of community lens directs our focus to the small things. Political action, and particularly radical political action, can often be spectacular, as when demonstrations spiral out of control, or a parliamentary party initiates a vote of no confidence in a government. Some political actions can even have spectacular consequences, as when a country invades another, or a revolution succeeds. Yet, I argue here that most political actions are not spectacular. Everyday political action is often mundane, routine, and habitual and appears to have little to no consequence. However, it is these habitual actions, decisions, and activities that are important to study. Understanding everyday habits allows us to examine how individuals come to join political groups, what attracts individuals to

different forms of politics, and how individuals maintain political commitment. As I have shown in this study, while an individual's political ideals may appear radical, they often have their roots in participation in everyday, conventional activities. Only in studying the actual participation of individuals in political activities can we understand why individuals may think violence is a legitimate political tactic, or why individuals engage in self-stigmatization rather than suffering from stigmatization.

Second, a politics of community de-reifies political action. As patterns of political behavior change, so too should our conceptualization of this behavior. In the introductory chapter, I noted that Dewey (1927/2016, p. 66) argues that studies must always begin with the "acts which are performed, not from the hypothetical causes for those acts." Here, I suggest that this is particularly true in the study of political action. If as I have advocated, we understand politics broadly, as dealing with the social organization of society, then we cannot restrict the study of political action to demonstrations, voting, or other similar behaviors. Social structure is constantly recreated, changed, and born anew in every interaction. Studying these interactions, and their consequences for social organization, allows us to understand, for example, why the extra-parliamentary left struggles to escape either the structures of the patriarchy or capitalism in a manner that focusing on ideology does not. A politics of community is a flexible approach to the study of political action. Just as any activity can be political, this also implies that any activity can be apolitical. Maintaining flexibility when studying political action is vital, as how individuals, groups, and communities define and understand political action varies dependent on context.

A politics of community approach also requires a focus on context. Here, context has a double meaning. First, we must examine the broader societal and historical context in which action takes place. Actions only become radical, stigmatized, or conventional within specific settings. In Sweden, for example, strikes are a radical action because of the history of Swedish industrial relations. Conversely, in other places and times, strikes are not radical, but lie within the conventional institutional union repertoire. Focusing on the context where actions occur allows for a better understanding of stigma, and how individuals chose to achieve or respond to stigma. Second, a politics of community requires that we focus on the local interactional context. Identity claims succeed or fail in interaction. We must therefore examine these interactions to understand how groups develop their specific habits and understandings of what legitimate

political action consists of, and how individuals become and demonstrate that they are, for example, extra-parliamentary leftists rather than parliamentary leftists. Furthermore, focusing on interactions allows for a greater focus on the fluidity of social life, as interactions always contain an element of chance.

Focusing on the making of political action also reminds us that every instance of collective action is an accomplishment. Lines of action are not automatically reproduced, but instead, are achieved. Understanding this achievement, rather than taking-for-granted that it will happen, allows for a better understanding of the conflicts and tensions inherent in all group activities. Furthermore, studying the accomplishment of deviant or counterhegemonic collective action, as in the case of the extra-parliamentary left, also helps to highlight the difficulties of escaping the deeply entrenched interactional patterns of our society. Understanding these patterns helps shed light not only on power relations and social structures, but also points out the weight of primary socialization. Socialization processes are vital to examine in studying collective action and help to point out the limits of reasonability. Some potential choices never become reasonable due to these learning processes, while other patterns of collective action similarly never arise.

Finally, maintaining a flexible, interactional view of political action allows us to begin research in the world of everyday life, rather than the world of sociological discourse. Social life is a continuous, ongoing accomplishment. Studying society with these principles in mind allows us not only to appreciate the creativity and ingenuity of human action, but also to better highlight the agency of participants in our research studies. Using a politics of community approach allowed me, I argue, to follow the principles of Dorothy Smith, Herbert Blumer, and Alfred Schutz and focus on the motivations and explanations of the actors involved in extra-parliamentary politics, rather than any removed theoretical explanations. Sociologically, therefore, I argue that the use of a politics of community allowed me to present a nuanced picture of the social world of the extra-parliamentary left, and allowed this study, in the words of C. Wright Mills, to examine the intersections and relations of biography and history along its journey.

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A Politics of Community



A growing variety in political activity, ranging from riots to boycotts to community gardening, has arisen as individuals turn away from institutional forms of political participation towards more everyday types of action. This study conceptualizes and analyzes one form of everyday, continuous political action as a politics of community.

A politics of community describes a form of collective action in which individuals pursue the creation of community spaces in their attempts to create social change.

A Politics of Community develops a new approach to the study of everyday, political action. Based on a long-term ethnographic study of the extra-parliamentary left in southern Sweden, this study analyzes not only why individuals join radical or stigmatized political groups but also explores how they maintain and recreate these groups and activities. Taking an interactionist approach, the study argues that understanding even radical forms of political action requires a focus on the mundane, routine, and habitual activities of political groups and demonstrates that it is only in studying the everyday that we can understand the spectacular.

