2021 | ANUAC. VOL. 10, N° 2, DICEMBRE 2021: 215-235

# Reluctant inscriptions

Social automatisms within the movement "Se Non Ora Quando?"

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**ABSTRACT:** In the course of the production of sociality, the interaction of interests, materialities and rules may occur in unintended and not foreseeable ways. Procedures and norms can establish themselves uncontrollably and contour politics. This paper proposes the application of the concept of social automatisms for the description of such social formation processes of the political, taking as an example the dynamics within the contemporary Italian feminist movement "Se Non Ora Quando?". Based on an ethnography of the movement (2012-2014), the paper demonstrates how traditions of interaction and philosophical thoughts of different groups of the Italian feminist movement of the 1970s have inscribed themselves in the discourses and practices of Se Non Ora Quando? in line with the concept of social automatisms: through repetition and perpetuation which, although occurring unplanned and partly unconsciously and against the intentions of the actors, cause a consolidation of structures (see Bublitz *et al.* 2010). These inscription processes have influenced political visions, interaction and protest practices as well as conflicts within the movement.

**KEYWORDS:** ANTHROPOLOGY OF POLICY; FEMINISM; MOVEMENT; SOCIAL AUTOMATISMS; ITALY.

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*Reluctant inscriptions: Social automatisms within the movement "Se Non Ora Quando?"*
2021 | ANUAC. VOL. 10, N° 2, DICEMBRE 2021: 215-235.
ISSN: 2239-625X - DOI: 10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4273

### *Automatisms: an approach for the analysis of the political*

With Hannah Arendt (2010: 10) the political can be understood as everyday practices taking place between people., i.e. negotiation processes in which institutions, movements, or individual actors create sociality (Rolshoven 2018: 23f; Fenske 2010: 9; Adam and Vonderau 2014: 19, 21). Interests, materialities, regulations, notions of normality and knowledge regimes meet, interact and inscribe themselves in policies in unforeseeable, unplanned and unintentional ways (Binder 2014: 364-367, 375; Collier, Ong 2005; Shore, Wright 2011: 20).

To investigate these dynamics, the concept of social automatisms seems feasible, which is so-far not widely used in anthropology. I have derived this concept using the theory of automatisms (e.g. see Bublitz *et al.* 2010). Automatisms are processes which can occur at the level of individual and collective action and are largely beyond conscious control. Examples are pedestrians who react to each other and their surroundings which leads to unplanned results like bottleneck oscillation – currents of people flowing first in one direction and then in the other (see Johansson 2010: 64f.). Collective automatisms can take place with, but also against the intention of the actors, and regardless of their will, but with their participation. They can be observed when actors act independently of each other, but their actions are not determined by external constraints. Automatisms are located between the conscious and the unconscious, the voluntary and the involuntary, the intentional and the non-intentional. They are formed over time through repetition, thus creating structures (see Marek 2010, Winkler 2010: 18-22).

The concept of social automatisms draws attention to dynamics taking place between actors. Automatisms describe how habitualisation processes can happen, i.e. the infiltration of the body and things by routines and regularities and the constitution and modification of social structures. However, the automatism approach goes further by clarifying not only in detail the mechanisms of structure formation beyond planned processes, but also the occurrence of the qualitatively new (see Conradi, Derwanz, Muhle 2011: 11). Automatisms help to analyse how previous and existing phenomena contribute to a recombination of discourses or practices. They describe how shifts in the repetitions of (speech) acts can effectuate quantitative changes whichcumulate to qualitative leaps changing the social fabric , e.g. in the form of the stabilisation of hierarchies. The automatism

concept thus also describes how cumulative processes and dynamics of their own lead to new, unpredictable results, which distinguishes this approach from deterministic theories. The automatism perspective also complements Michel Foucault's theories such as dispositives which Foucault (1978) describes as heterogeneous networks of discursive and non-discursive elements that generate and maintain norms and behaviour. The automatism perspective determines how discourses and practices become effective and how their effects are inscribed in the subjects. It shows how tactics intertwine in unpredictable ways and can thus produce unintended results, and explains recursive transitions between levels: structures that have emerged from practices influence the emergence of subsequent practices.

Automatisms can also be put into context with assemblage (see DeLanda 2006) and actor-network theories (ANT, e.g. see Latour 2005), which treat phenomena as continuous effects of relational networks and describe how human and non-human actors are interconnected and interact in such networks. Similarly, the concept of automatisms illuminates the agency and powerful interaction of people, things and discourses and the inherent logics of infrastructures and their uses.

As social automatisms I define processes that develop through the dynamics of interactions which can be non-verbal practices as well as speech acts. Social automatisms take place largely unplanned and "behind the back" of the actors through an interplay of bottom up and top down dynamics, and lead to the emergence of behavioural tendencies and social structures (see Näser-Lather 2014).

My paper analyses such processes in political fields, taking as an example two contradictory developments within a contemporary Italian feminist movement, "Se Non Ora Quando?" (abbreviated SNOQ): the conflicts revolving around the concept of transversality and the emergence of hierarchies. I draw on ethnographic research of the movement I conducted between 2012 and 2014. Participant observations and interviews build the backbone of my analysis. I conducted 34 participant observations at actions of local SNOQ groups and local as well as national meetings and thematic interviews (Witzel 2000, Schorn 2000) with 55 SNOQ activists. My interview partners were both members of local groups from twelve Italian cities located in different parts of the country and members of the movements leading group, the promoting committee. As interview partners, I selected women who seemed to be the most active group members. A discourse analysis (Jäger 2009) of documents and postings on national and local websites and mailing lists of the movement complements my ethnographic data (see Näser-Lather 2019).

After introducing the movement, I will point out how practices of interaction, norms, and feeling rules of the Italian feminist groups of the 1970s and Italian difference feminism have inscribed themself in SNOQ. I will show that this took place through social automatisms and I will point out how these dynamics have contributed to internal conflicts.

## *Se Non Ora Quando? A new Italian feminist movement*

SNOQ was founded in 2011, after a group of partly famous and influential women in Rome issued an appeal to protest against the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. His affair with then-underage dancer Karima El-Marough was lead to a desire to protest which was fuelled by the existing dissatisfaction on his politics as well as by decades of perceived marginalization of women in Italian society. On 13 February 2011, demonstrations were held in numerous Italian cities, and also in other countries, under the motto "Se Non Ora Quando?" ("If not now, when?"). Hundred thousand of women and also men from different political, religious and social affiliations participated. Subsequently, a feminist movement with the same name emerged, with temporarily more than 150 active local groups. In 2011, feminist groups that had emerged from Italian difference feminism, like Diotima or the Libreria delle Donne di Milano, already existed. Also, numerous local (trans-)feminist activist groups who referred to other feminist traditions had been established, e.g. sex workers activism and LGBT movements (see Bonomi Romagnoli 2014). However, SNOQ was the first movement since the 1970s to draw nationwide attention.

SNOQ demands measures in various socio-political areas. The movement interprets the social crisis as a symptom of a patriarchal system that resulted in the discrimination of women (see SNOQ 2012). The feminist vision of SNOQ aims to change the symbolic order and to fight a perceived hegemonic masculinist mentality. The main goal of the movement is to create "a country for women", which includes the equal representation of women in political decision-making bodies, the reconciliation of work and family life, a change in the sexist media and social view of women and the fight against gender-based violence (see SNOQ 2013).

Initially, the women of the national promoting committee (comitato promotore nazionale, CPN), which had organised the demonstrations of 13 February, claimed a leading role. However, in July 2013 the committee split into the groups Factory and Libere, and in the course of time, a division of the movement occured. From 2014 on, fewer and fewer local groups were active under the name Se Non Ora Quando?.

The conflicts leading to this development resulted, on one hand, from the reluctance of the CPN to involve local groups in their decisions and to put into question their leading role, which had been requests of many movement members. However, also social automatisms played a crucial role, leading to the inscription of the interaction norms of the feminist groups of the 1970s and of gender concepts derived from Italian difference feminism in SNOQ. These traditions influenced the political positioning, communication modes and protest practices of the movement and in part contributed to internal conflicts.

### *Transversality, or: is political activism on the basis of gender possible?*

For the political work of the movement, the CPN wanted to avoid the "mistakes" of the Italian feminist groups of the 1970s, namely their reference to left-wing politics and their perceived exclusion of women without "critical" consciousness. In the opinion of the CPN, such a positioning did not represent all women (Näser-Lather 2019: 184).

Instead, SNOQ developed the principle of transversality: the involvement of women from all political and ideological backgrounds because "being a woman in this country already constitutes in itself a political fact, well before, and beyond, the political, religious, age and experience convictions or affiliations of each one", as one member of the CPN stated. Transversality means that gender-specific attitudes and needs can guarantee common political objectives. Starting from personal experiences which are imagined to be similar, the category of sex is constructed as basis for common political action. In itself, this stance can be traced back to a specific (mis-)interpretation of Italian difference feminism which propagated material, cultural and historical differences between men and women. Difference feminism was the most prominent philosophy influencing Italian feminist groups of the 1970s (cf. e.g. Lonzi 1970). However, the principle of transversality resulted in political decisions which in part contradicted traditional feminist goals. For example, the CPN did not campaign against a law which prohibed preliminary examination in in vitro fertilization. They justified their not taking a stance with transversality, namely, that they intended to also please Catholics and right-wing women.

In addition, contrary to the principle of transversality, most local SNOQ groups developed left-wing, secular feminist convictions. This is due in part to the fact that, over time, women who during the 1970s had belonged to the left-wing oriented feminist movement joined SNOQ and gained influence within the movement. Of my interviewees, according to their own statement

30 percent had been activists during the 1970s. In many SNOQ committees, they became role models whose expertise regarding terminology and feminist thought was appreciated. Lea, a middle-aged activist of SNOQ Florence, describes accordant learning processes: "for example, because of the eighth of March, a woman got very angry, because we used the expression 'feast of woman' – and then you understand, [...] that it is no feast." As I could observe during group meetings of SNOQ Florence, the inputs of the older group members were valued, especially by younger women and those without feminist experience. The latter formed a major part of some groups because of the low threshold of participation of SNOQ. The movement intended to include all women and therefore, focused more on political action than on the development of feminist theories. This appealed to many women who had not previously been involved in feminism. Lucia, a student and one of the youngest SNOQ Florence members, was enthusiastic about "talking to someone like Flavia, who has always been an example of feminism". She continues: "they always know more than you, and therefore – you are also there to learn something, especially. Because they [...] have much more experience than you, and so you listen, you learn, and then - you try yourself." Lucia states that the stories of the more experienced feminists gave her a sense of hope and helped her "in understanding who you are, where you are, what you want."

However, in the beginning the older women within the group were reluctant to perform this role. Rosella, psychologist and founder of a feminist group in the 1970s, did not see herself as a teacher for the younger ones. Flavia, who is over 70 years old and had been a leading unionist and local politician, was astonished that the younger and less experienced women expected her to teach them something. Yet, over time, both of them seemed to have gotten used to being role models and "living archives" of SNOQ Florence, often giving talks on historical and political contexts. Thus, in an unplanned fashion, through a repetition of similar interactions, and in part, against their will, the activists of the Italian feminist movement of the 1970s gained authority. Also, in some cities SNOQ committees were collaborating with other activist groups with a strong historical feminist tradition. In Florence, a cooperative relationship with the Giardino dei Ciliegi emerged, a feminist meeting point organizing events and founded in the 1980s among others by women from the PCI (the Italian Communist Party).

Through the practicing of feminist attitudes that took place in group interactions and through exchanging ideas with other activist groups, many SNOQ committees developed, unplanned and in the course of time, a

distinct feminist consciousness. Their manifestation of feminism was shaped by a politically left orientation despite the initial will of the groups to be open for the views of all women. As Lea explains, SNOQ Florence activists distanced themselves from transversality which understood common political activism as solely based on gender. Instead, they developed a clear substantive feminist positioning that had crystallised over time. These dynamics occurred also in other SNOQ committees. In part because of the influence of the feminists of the 1970s, transversality has not really been implemented in the local SNOQ groups. The committees I researched were almost exclusively dominated by members with left-wing political views. In other cases, at least their inner, decision-making circles were composed of women from the left[1]. In addition, the member structure of SNOQ changed from women striving for Berlusconi's resignation to women more interested in feminism.

Other factors were the focus of some groups on political goals that were necessarily linked with left-wing positions (e.g., the defence of abortion rights), and already existing affiliations to the left wing of some of the activists. In the end, although some women defended transversality vehemently, having entered the movement precisely for its existence, the majority of SNOQ members adopted a critical stance towards this principle. They prioritized feminist views connected to specific political positions before a "gender consciousness". Claudia of SNOQ Rome describes as a premise for cooperation the recognition of feminist principles: "it is difficult [...] to have a relationship with women who do not identify themselves with the principles of freedom, women's rights, the history of the movement". In accordance with this precondition, only "women who have a history in the area of certain values, which are solidarity, social justice, well above all secularity and freedom and the protection of civil rights" are members of her committee. Some activists derived from their understanding of Italian difference feminism that only women with a left-wing positioning could be feminists and/or persons with whom cooperation was possible.

Cristina Comencini, one of the founders of the movement, attributed the split of SNOQ to these developments which she interpreted as a betrayal of transversality. In her narration about the history of the movement, mainly

1.It is worthwhile noticing that also in other respects like race and class, SNOQ is not transversal; rather, it´s a movement of the middle class, of a white and quite privileged perspective. Most of the activists are between 40 and 60 years old and hold university degrees, the majority is employed or in retirement. This may be due to habitus effects: in their appeals for protest, from the beginning the movement was addressing educated women from the middle and upper classes.

politically inactive, and, as she called them, “normal” women from the most diverse backgrounds followed the call of SNOQ, precisely because the movement was not politically one-sided. But then, the “normal“ women disappeared and a feminist “avant-garde“ emerged which over time dominated the movement (Comencini 2013).

Thus, a turning away from transversality and a partial shift of SNOQ towards leftist positions occurred in automatistic manner, without being planned and in part against the intention of the activists themselves. Those differences had the effect of inhibiting trust and intensifying conflicts, between local groups and the CPN as well as within the latter.

*Interaction modes: feminist norms, communication and protest*

Besides political positions, interaction modes of the feminist groups of the 1970s were habitualized and inscribed in the movement culture of SNOQ. The position of experienced feminists as figures of authority and role models can be described as a diluted form of affidamento, mentoring relationships between younger and older women. This practice was developed by feminists in Milan (e.g., see Libreria delle donne di Milano 1991: 182). Also, self-experience was practiced to some extent within SNOQ. Self-experience is understood as the analysis of daily personal experiences with the goal of feminist awareness and of identifying gender-political structural issues (see Anderlini-D´Onofrio 1994: 223). It was a central practice within feminist groups of the 1970s. Both affidamento and self-experience are addressed indirectly in a statement by Carola, a member of SNOQ San Donà di Piave:

> there has been an exchange, in my opinion, I don’t say that we have done psychotherapy, but almost [...] when you listen to someone like her (points to Martha)) who expresses herself with such power [...] or others who express themselves differently, have different characteristics. Everyone asks “But why is she like that?” and then when you go home you think, you look at yourself, at your behaviour – that’s the beauty of the group – that’s the purpose of the group.

Similarly, the activists of SNOQ Florence analyse group dynamics during the meetings with the help of members who are psychologists. As one of them, Fiorella, explains, the goal of these conversations is “to differentiate oneself above all from each other. We are different. But also, to find some – themes, elements that unite us”. This statement is in line with distinctions made by Italian difference feminism which besides the difference between the sexes, also highlights the difference between women and between each woman (e.g., see Lonzi 1970). Interaction norms of Italian feminist activism

of the 1970s connected to these practices of interpersonal exchange in small groups contain the relevance of trust and of listening to each other and establishing close personal relationships (e.g. see Bono, Kemp 1991: 139; Campari *et al* 1991). Within the local SNOQ committees, the activists strived to establish friendly relations with each other through leisure activities and solidarity, frequently spending their spare time together. During national meetings, an effort was made to establish personal relationships. At the meeting of Ancona in 2013, one activist called for giving more space to get to know each other better, to generate positive feelings and to develop a common identity. Especially mutual trust, which was fundamental to the self-experience groups of the 1970s (see e.g. Bicchieri/Roditi 1977: 248), represents an important prerequisite for joint work.

Also, other interaction norms which can be traced back to the Italian feminist groups of the 1970s were frequently mentioned at local and national meetings of SNOQ: the effort for friendly feelings, listening to each other, appreciating differences and anchoring yourself in the material life of women.[2] They represented an ideal and became feeling rules within SNOQ – norms of socially desirable emotions that are produced according to the respective situation (Hochschild 1979). This is illustrated by the reactions when, at the national meeting in February 2014, SNOQ Florence announced they would leave the movement. While some women wanted to continue the discussion on content which was planned for that day, many others were shocked. One activist exclaimed: "you cannot say this is THEIR problem - these are our friends." Another woman pledged that it was important in this situation to trust each other. And a third argued: "we can reach a common goal only together. We were already very different at the beginning, but this is our richness." A SNOQ member who had been an activist during the 1970s stated that the relations between women did not foresee such disruptive behaviour and instead required women to stay together while respecting each other.

The background for these statements is that interactional values of the Italian feminist groups of the 1970s and of Italian difference feminism created behaviour expectations that assign women a special way of activism and interaction. Women are believed by some SNOQ activists to be solidary because of gender, de-escalating and harmonising because of motherhood, and characterised by sharing not only points of view, but also feelings.

2.These specific features of SNOQ are worthwhile noticing against the background of the nowadays ever-increasing spread of movements which are organized as project working groups who collaborate only temporarily and do not develop neither a strong collective identity and for whom the mentioned values and relationships to other activists are not central (e.g. see Schönberger 2014).

Movement researcher Mary Holmes explains that difference feminism in general has made the anger of feminist women towards each other a taboo (Holmes 2004: 215)[3]. According to the feminist activist Pilar Alba (1981), this has the effect that an atmosphere of emotional support, harmony and cooperation is expected at feminist meetings. At the national meetings of SNOQ I could indeed observe that open anger was difficult to bear. The appeal to appreciate differences was often uttered during conflicts, in the situation of unbridgeable factual differences. In such circumstances, the behavioural expectation to appreciate differences created a cognitive dissonance between the actual and target emotional state – between what *should* be felt – sisterhood with all women – and what *is* felt. One activist analysed the dynamics within the aforementioned national meeting accordingly, stating that they were the result of the "myth of the relationship between women" which led to the fact that "we are all not free because we have been conditioned by stereotypes".

The interaction norms and feeling rules which have established themselves over time and unplanned within SNOQ had effects not only on the handling of conflicts, but also on the organization of communication and protest and the perception of hierarchies.

Practices and norms of interaction which are centred around the values of friendship and trust require physical co-presence. They thus structure internal communication and protest practices in the sense of a central position of direct face-to-face contact. The personal encounter is seen as the basis of political work and as essential for relationship building, political exchange and the development of a collective identity.

The question of whether digital media can also be suitable "places" for political exchange has been controversially discussed within the movement. Already at the first national meeting in 2011 at Siena, some SNOQ groups stated that working on the internet and social networks could not replace the physical meeting of bodies which is associated with a special quality of community. Also, a document of SNOQ Factory states: "Only in the concreteness of meetings with women (seeing, listening) do we want to work." (SNOQ Factory 2013). The mutual exchange and its subject-transforming potentials are conceived as sensually mediated direct encounters.

Furthermore, physical co-presence is described some SNOQ activists as harmonizing, an effect which Giorgia, a young sociologist and member of the CPN, connects with feminist feeling rules and norms of sisterhood:

3.Difference feminism has been an influential philosophy not only in Italy, but also in other European countries during the 1970s.

> Sometimes it is indispensable to see each other face to face [...] conflicts and tensions dissolve to a great extent [...] women's politics contain a very important thing [...] many relationships have changed, also personal ones, when you see each other, yes, even people who have said bad things to each other on Facebook on the Internet [...] when you sit together in the meeting and say things to each other's faces and explain things to each other, they have reached the point of becoming friends.

According to an internal survey by activists of the movement, communication via digital media was mostly not used for important decisions, but for their preparation and practical implementation as well as for less important decisions that required fast reactions. Only on the basis of existing relationships and trust are decisions made online, as Lea of SNOQ Florence states: "we did it over the internet to save on transport costs, but it worked because we knew and trusted each other". At the national assembly in Rome in October 2013, one activist expressed the fear that communication that takes place solely via digital media would lead to a temporary engagement in which personal relationships would be lost, which SNOQ sees as the basis of political practice.

These attitudes are in part due to the influence of the interaction and protest traditions of the Italian feminist groups of the 1970s. In line with them, SNOQ preferred classical forms of protest characterized by physical co-presence which allowed for direct contact with the population. Of the local committees, 87 percent used demonstrations, 97 percent sensibilization events, and 81 percent flash mobs, while only 45 percent resorted to online petitions and 13 percent to protest mail blogs or websites (cf. Pavan 2013: 7-9). Antonella, physiotherapist and one of the leaders of SNOQ Reggio Calabria, states: "our primary work is, in quotes, contact with people, so handing out flyers. We don't deviate from contact, from being able to talk to people. Because that is fundamental for us." The importance of friendships within the group – which emerged from the experience of the activisms of the 1970s – contributed to this attitude.

### *Horizontality vs. hierarchies*

The Italian women's movement of the 1970s was characterised by the rejection of political practices which were considered as "male", such as hierarchical structures and the principle of majority rule. Instead, preference was given to grassroots democratic procedures in which group decisions were supported unanimously by all, which were to emerge in the discussion process (cf. Bono, Kemp 1991: 139).

This form of decision-making was also practised in most local committees and in the CPN. The majority of the activists rejected voting and majority decisions and favoured the unanimous decision which was, as one activist formulated it, an unwritten rule which had established itself within the movement. This preference of SNOQ members can be traced back to the described difference feminist topoi. As an activist from Siena states, they do not want to conduct politics in a "male" way, i.e., as action motivated by particular power interests and not aimed at the common good and people's needs. She continues that the mode of unanimity was derived from the self-experience groups of the 1970s. Every woman starts out from her own material life; as a result, a consensus emerges almost automatically in the group that corresponds to the unanimous conviction of all (cf. Näser-Lather 2014).

The "partire da sé", the going out from oneself, is a practice which should lead to an awareness of (structural) socio-political problems. Moreover, it strives to enable women to perceive themselves as autonomous subject and no longer merely as an object of observation from the dominant male point of view (Libreria delle donne di Milano 1991: 40). Similarly, the unanimous decision making of SNOQ should have a consciousness-raising effect, through a process of self-knowledge, feminist self-development and a recognition of the positions of others. In this way, a connection to other women can also be established as the phrase "parting from oneself in order to arrive at the viewpoint of the others" suggests, which is often quoted by SNOQ members. At the end of this process, a common group will emerges. Martha from San Donà di Piave explains: "we grow together, we have an idea, we talk about it, I talk, you talk, and my opinion changes thanks to yours, yours thanks to mine, and so we come to a conclusion [...] we find the way together".This ideal of horizontality stems from the practices of the feminists of the 1970s (cf. Bono, Kemp 1991: 139). However, despite this goal and despite their influence in SNOQ, informal structures and also hierarchies emerged in many of the local groups of the movement over time and in part against the intentions of the group members, i.e., in the form of social automatisms. This happened through group dynamics which caused that some activists gradually took responsibility.

Most SNOQ committees were organized in different layers of involvement. A core group of particularly committed members were primarily responsible for the planning process, another group of regularly active members were involved in the decision-making process, and a periphery of rather sporadically active supporters mainly participated at protest actions. Such differentiations took place unplanned and sometimes without the participants noticing this development. They occured through the repetition

of interactions which produced role expectations and corresponding habitus forms through the formation and consolidation of procedures. As the examples of SNOQ Florence, Reggio Calabria, Genoa, and San Donà di Piave show, there is a clear desire to avoid creating hierarchies and opportunities to distinguish oneself; yet, hierarchies evolved.

In Florence, the activists changed their organizational structures over a period of several months. However, as time progressed, the distribution of tasks became such that two of the members, Lea and Stefania, who both had strong personalities, had developed as leaders. Their positions manifested themselves in terms of high commitment and organizational responsibility, with Lea more focussing on internal and Stefania on external communication. In line with this, when I asked for an interview, several activists first referred me to them as the most competent persons who were ascribed a special power of interpretation.

Lea was permanently responsible for the coordination and organisation of group meetings and protest actions. When I participated at group meetings, it was Lea who structured the discussion, calling the others to order, and recording the results, although there was no official distinction between "moderator" and "participants". On February 21 2013, in a meeting conducted in a community centre in Florence, the activists discuss their protest actions in the immediate future. Lea asks: "There are a lot of events on the eight [of march, the international women´s day] – what do we want to do? […] We have to decide today". They consider dancing when the Pro-Life Activists are doing events, until Lea points out that it would be inappropriate to dance while they are praying. Another member suggests that the financial support of the province towards anti-abortion organisations should be disclosed. Lea takes up this suggestion and delegates the task to the woman who has made the proposal.

Group interactions often occurred in such a manner. Despite the pronounced intention of the group to have no leaders, it was usually Lea who initiated topics, drew attention to the necessity of decisions and presented accordant alternatives. Through the cumulative interaction of all participants in the meetings, these practices were solidified over time. Like this, Lea's informal leadership position gradually crystallized and was maintained and consolidated in ongoing negotiation processes.

Similarly, in Reggio Calabria, Antonella and Luciana emerged as group leaders, despite the conviction voiced by Antonella, that "our movement […] is a horizontal movement. In the sense that we all decide the modalities together, we all discuss together, and we act together. No boss comes and tells the subordinates, tomorrow we'll do it. Absolutely not".

In SNOQ Florence, SNOQ Venice and SNOQ Reggio di Calabria, two activists each took prominent roles. Such informal leadership structures, based on the commitment and assertiveness of the respective actors, can be found in numerous movements (e.g., see Della Porta, Piazza 2008: 51).

The resulting hierarchies were consolidated through the repetition of practices, namely increased media visibility in the form of online presence of the respective activists. The informal leaders in some committees are the ones who manage the committees´ mailing list, Google Groups or Facebook group, who invite to meetings online and who actively post content on social media sites. In addition, many local committees differentiate between open and restricted Facebook groups. Open groups are intended to be used by people in the periphery of the movement as well as activists who are continuously involved but do not belong to the core group. Restricted groups are reserved for core members. The emergence of segregated online-communication spaces solidified offline hierarchies by creating privileged access to information and limiting participation. These processes occurred without the intention of the group members, in a complex interplay of online presence and access to certain online platforms and offline group processes.

Hierarchies, thus, do exist in many of the SNOQ groups. In most cases they manifest themselves more as rudimentary differences of agency than as rigid structures. However, the existence of such power-based relationships is hardly addressed and is mostly only revealed indirectly. On the contrary, it is masked by the fact that horizontal structures and the avoidance of hierarchies still function as normative ideals. The dynamics of on one hand striving for horizontality and on the other the emergence of hierarchies is demonstrated by the effort to establish counter measures. Within SNOQ Genoa, the groups´ coordinator, Eva, tried to establish equality, especially regarding the distribution of tasks concerning communication with the public; however, she clearly assumed a leading role.

In some committees, the delegation of political capacity to act is only accepted on a temporary basis, aiming, in the long term, to enable as many group members as possible to take decisions on behalf of the others. Martha of SNOQ San Donà di Piave states: “We try not to make anyone stand out [...] maybe we work a little bit more than the others, but well, there are four or five of us who work more, around which there is another group, then an even bigger group. [...] some talk more, others less.” Nevertheless, even in critical moments, Martha acts as a coordinator, according to fellow group member Carola.

Within local groups, authority could be accepted because of personal trust. In SNOQ Venice, the coordinating – and factual leading – role of two older members, Grazia and Simonetta, is acknowledged. The reason is the existing relationship of trust with both women, resulting in the conviction that they would not abuse their power. This conviction stems from the already mentioned attitudes of difference feminism in general which associate female gender identity with de-escalating, solidary behaviour that is not oriented towards the striving for power, with a preference for horizontality, sisterhood and personal trust (cf. Freeman 1978). As Rosella of SNOQ Florence explains also with recourse to her feminist experiences in the 1970s: "if I have a good relationship with the five people who make decisions because they are the ones who work the most, I trust them [...] but if we do not meet, especially at the level of friendship, I am against them making decisions". If, on the other hand, such relationships do not exist, one might be, as she continues, dissatisfied with the decisions and feel negative emotions towards the persons concerned.

Exactly those values made it difficult to accept authority and leadership at the national level where trust could not be built up to the extent of the local groups because of the greater heterogeneity and the widespread lack of close personal relationships (see Näser-Lather 2019: 264-266).

## *Conclusion*

The feminist understanding and traditions of the women's movement of the 1970s have inscribed themselves unplanned and partly unconsciously and against the intention of the participants, i.e. automatically. They configured the group processes of the movement by establishing and habitualizing interaction practices, leading to the shifting of roles and ultimately to the consolidation of relationships, patterns of action and structures.

This creation of structures happened in a parallel way in many SNOQ groups. Automatisms, as Bublitz *et al.* put it, merge into a regime of highly effective logics. Their effects seem to be "particularly effective where different actors act independently of one another without central control" (Bublitz et. al. 2010: 10) as was the case in SNOQ.

Feeling rules and modes of interaction have been inscribed in SNOQ group procedures in form of standardization and normalization. These processes occurred in part through the influence of activists who had been members of the feminist groups of the 1970s. The previous and existing traditions contributed to a recombination of practices.

Automatisms are formed over time through the repetition of speech acts and practices. They create dynamics and structures which emerge unplanned via an interplay of bottom-up and top-down processes through the interaction of different actors and technologies – in the case of SNOQ, digital infrastructures. The resulting procedures in the women's groups initially simplified interactions, since they did not have to be repeatedly redefined through negotiation processes. At the same time, however, the automatistic creation of solidified standards, interaction norms and resulting behaviour expectations has led to conflicts within SNOQ.

Social automatisms had contradictory effects, in part establishing the interaction traditions of the feminist group of the 1970s within SNOQ and in part working against them. Hierarchies emerged and became a stabilizing effect in the establishment of unplanned structures, however only on the basis of their being built on friendly relationships and personal trust. Yet, those informal hierarchies led to the development of practices of demarcation, containment, and exclusion mechanisms – contrary to the movement's internal values of horizontality, basic democracy, equality and fluidity. As we can see from the example of the group processes in Se Non Ora Quando?, automatisms are formed over time, and they generate dynamics that have a structuring effect: networks of relationships and structures emerge spontaneously. Through unplanned processes, some of which take place behind the backs of the participants, historically evolved procedures and feeling rules assert themselves insofar as the formation and consolidation of behaviour takes place through the repetition of interaction. This involves both communication and interactions stored in cultural memory, which influence current social dynamics as habitualised discursive traditions. The transmission of interaction traditions and values of the feminist groups of the 1970s and Italian difference feminism partly takes place in the form of unintended socialisation effects, as opposed to the concrete transmission of experiences. Thus, in the case of the women's movement SNOQ, an unplanned inscription of habitus, modes of perception and interaction by means of social automatisms. The concept of social automatisms can thus clarify the question which Bohnsack (2013: 196) mentions as gap in Bourdieu´s theory, namely how the class-specific habitus is superimposed and modified in a gender- and generation-specific way.

As I have shown, the automatistic perspective represents an approach to rethink phenomena of the interaction between actors and social relations within social movements. It therefore complements movement theories such as Alexander Leistner´s (2013) key figures approach which describes that for different tasks in movements, different actors emerge, such as leadership

figures, witnesses and martyrs, mentors, masterminds, networkers, actionists and renegades. The concept of social automatisms also can serve to concretize other theories, for example expanding Judith Butler's investigations into the performativity of speech acts (e.g. see Butler 1995). It determines more precisely how discourses and practices become effective and how their effects inscribe themselves on the subjects - e.g. when, through the described group dynamics, hierarchies emerge in the group SNOQ Florence against the will of the group members. The example of Se Non Ora Quando? shows that the concept of social automatisms can explain in detail how dynamics of power as effects of non-subjective intentionality and located beyond individual interests take place. Such processes are described by Michel Foucault when he states: "Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault 1998: 94). Social automatisms have promoted internal conflicts within the movement Se Non Ora Quando? in that they led to members behaving contrary to norms established by the movement such as horizontality.

The social automatisms taking place in the movement Se Non Ora Quando? illustrate the nature of politics as described by Hannah Arendt (1958: 98) as arising "out of acting and speaking together" and its being located "between people". The theoretical perspective of automatisms draws attention to dynamics of interactions that go beyond what is controllable and available to the subjects. It can therefore make an important contribution to the disclosure of such processes, which are highly effective in group processes, but also in the political sphere. A re-appro-priation of power to act can thus be made possible.

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*Reluctant inscription: Social automatisms within the movement "Se Non Ora Quando?"*
2021 | ANUAC. VOL. 10, N° 2, DICEMBRE 2021: 215-235.
ISSN: 2239-625X - DOI: 10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4273