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# FEMINISE POLITICS NOW!



TOOLKIT CREATED BY  
THE MUNICIPALIST MOVEMENT



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# PREFACE

*How can we make our organisations more democratic? How can we make our work and activism more inclusive in practice? How can we, as activists, practitioners, educators, citizens, members of movements and organisations ensure that we implement feminist values at work and in our everyday lives? These questions have been on the minds of leftists and feminists for a long time and have been addressed in depth by the municipalist movement, which has developed practices designed to democratise politics and thereby put feminism centre stage. This publication offers insights into what the movement has learnt and presents a set of tried-and-tested tools based on its political experience, a toolkit that can be adopted, adjusted and implemented by like-minded organisations, movements and activists.*

A few years ago, when the municipalist wave swept through major cities, especially in Spain, inspiring 'rebel' or 'fearless' cities in many countries, left-wing movements and actors held their breath. In the aftermath of the economic crisis and ensuing imposition of harsh austerity measures, whilst elsewhere the (far) right was racking up huge gains by making scapegoats of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, here was a progressive, positive, constructive movement effectively responding to a system that had failed countless societies. Municipalism harnessed together a wide array of local struggles for solidarity in a bid to shape the agenda and radically transform politics. And it succeeded in winning elections! Since then, the municipalist movement's radical participatory programme has revitalised discussion on the left about what democracy can look like in practice, and new municipalism has become an arena for practising *feminism*. This should come as no surprise, for feminism is on new municipalists' political agenda in the form of attempts to *feminise politics*. Municipalists' critique of institutions mirrors many aspects of the feminist critique of liberal democracy. Indeed, their emphasis on empathy, care, togetherness, sharing, empowerment and non-violence represents a veritable paradigm shift in political culture, a progressive step that feminists have been trying to take for a long time.

New municipalism's approach to political processes enables us to see politics as a realm that can serve to create communities, empowering people to take care of themselves, their peers and others. It provides extensive food for thought on our own practices, biases and unacknowledged assumptions, with inbuilt mechanisms designed to prevent reproducing stereotypical divisions of labour and responsibility. This outlook derives from an understanding that political activism focused on mutuality, social justice, equality and plurality has to be

based on practices that implement these values. In addition, municipalism views power as a positive, creative force for overcoming local, economic, patriarchal and racist prejudices and other forms of domination and exploitation. Although municipalism comes in various forms, its variants share key commonalities. On the whole, the approach asks important questions and, aligned to varying needs, develops dynamic, practicable answers. Among many other things, it asks how political institutions (including leadership within our own organisations, for example) could be designed to ensure the participation of disadvantaged and/or marginalised and excluded groups. It also asks how we can prevent co-optation and avoid succumbing to the rationales of existing institutions and external structures, for example when competing in elections or when cooperating with others. It asks how we can create structures of community that enable responsibility to be shared and us to look after ourselves, others and each other. It also asks how we can make certain that our own interactions and communication do not end up excluding specific groups. And it asks how we can use our own resources more efficiently without falling back on stereotypical divisions of labour or exhausting ourselves.

At our foundation, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS), we believe there are many lessons to learn from the municipalist experience, not just for political platforms, but – crucially – for activists, social movements and organisations everywhere. Over the past five years or so, ‘new municipalists’ have experimented with different political practices, trying to make political decision-making include groups that tend to steer clear of politics or are less vociferous, and also attempting to radically transform politics, not so much in terms of devising specific policies, but focusing more on the political process.

For this publication, activists from the movement joined forces to share and discuss the experiences of six cities, which should help to clarify the *raison d’être* of the measures proposed in the toolkit. They reflect on the obstacles, challenges, contradictions and limitations they faced and crucially on ways of overcoming them. Their input invites us to reflect on our own organisations and think about ourselves. Many scenarios will be familiar to readers and thus constitute excellent starting points for trying to adopt ideas taken from the toolkit. Of course, this is but one contribution to the debate about the feminisation of politics, fuelling a dialogue that has only just begun. We therefore thank all the women\* involved in developing the toolkit for their openness and willingness and for enabling us to engage in their process, learn from it and build on it.

Ada Regelmann & Vera Bartolomé

# INTRODUCTION

Feminism seems to be gaining momentum. The massive protests on 8 March 2018 and 2019 brought fresh air into the movement and incentivised young women to take the lead. In addition, the idea of *feminising politics* is starting to become part of the leftist political agenda. The good news is that organisations are becoming more aware that although feminism has been part of the discourse for many years now, practices are largely still based on patriarchal standards.

In this context, municipalist organisations are, to an extent, taking the lead in feminising politics or doing their best to drive things forward. One of the hypotheses on which this report is based is that there is a good theoretical and practical fit between feminism and municipalism (Roth & Shea Baird, 2018). Working from the local level, where people actually live, instead of building big organisations makes it much easier to implement feminist practices. The reverse is also true: implementing feminist practices helps to achieve municipalist aims by practising new, more democratic politics. The aim of this report is not to demonstrate the truth or falsity of this hypothesis, but to critically describe what the feminisation of politics actually means for municipalist organisations, show how feminism and municipalism are connected in practice and examine the progress and challenges of the municipalist project of feminising politics.

The report addresses seven topics that have been identified by the municipalist movement as part of the feminisation of politics, including issues such as a feminist style of leadership, intersectionality and democracy. It discusses what these topics are all about, why they need to feature in the political agenda, what the main challenges are and which concrete tools can be implemented to make progress.

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The report aims to share the thoughts and knowledge of municipalist organisations and, above all, strengthen the municipalist movement. However, the discussions and tools presented are also of use to other kinds of organisations, such as more traditional political parties, social movements and various kinds of collectives.

## WHAT DO

## "MUNICIPALISM AND THE FEMINISATION OF POLITICS"

## ACTUALLY MEAN?

'New municipalism', 'democratic municipalism' or 'fearless cities' are some of the names associated with this growing movement over the past few years. Some of the characteristics of the citizen platforms belonging to it are their aim of building power *from the bottom up* (i.e. from the local level, through horizontal organisation), their close relationship with social movements, their plan to blur the borders between public institutions and the community, their desire to practise radical democracy, their focus on working as networks (instead of building nation-based political parties), and of course their feminism (Roth, 2019b). In a political context where the public is disenchanted with traditional politics and the far right is gaining support in different parts of the world, municipalism is emerging as a project designed to question political practices and to break the pessimistic trend. Instead of focusing on 'winning the state' based on some theoretical hypothesis (like Marxism or left-wing populism) and relying on big, hierarchical organisational structures, it derives from people's actual real experiences, concerns and capabilities. It sets out to build power where people actually live (in cities and towns) and work both within and outside city councils. A map of the municipalist organisations, generated by the movement itself, can be found on [fearlesscities.com](https://fearlesscities.com).

Feminism is included in the municipalist agenda. But what does the feminisation of politics amount to? Does it mean everyone should behave like women? Be nicer to each other? Does it mean having female leaders? Does it mean demanding and implementing feminist public policies?

The municipalist movement sees three elements as being part of the concept of feminising politics:

- > implementing feminist public policies;
- > attaining a greater gender balance in the distribution of positions and responsibilities;
- > developing feminist ways of doing things (beyond gender balance).

This report focuses primarily on the second and the third elements, since it mainly analyses what is (or could be) happening in municipalist organisations, as opposed to in public institutions, with a view to shedding some light on the progress made and challenges to address, finding arguments to explain why political platforms should become more feminist in how they engage people in political action, and providing some practical ideas. This is what we mean by «ways of doing things»: political processes and the forms politics takes, not simply the content or substance of policies or other political decisions and projects. Instead of looking at the feminist output that municipalism is generating (though that is certainly both interesting and important), we focus on what municipalist organisations do on a daily basis to achieve substantive results. In other words, we spotlight organisations' practices and also how they transform themselves and their participants along the way: because changing things like structures, relationships, language, times and priorities is a key element of feminist politics.

More will be said about this in the Clarifications section, but it is worth stressing that the authors of this report believe it is important for feminism to make men (especially privileged ones) reverse practices and power relations determined by them and adapt to ways of doing things that are more common among women and other disadvantaged groups. Patriarchal practices were created by privileged men, and they feel more at home in them than their female peers do. On the other hand – and this is highly relevant to our discussion –, compared to the masculine alternatives, some of the practices into which women have traditionally been socialised are better suited to working and defining shared life together. Thus, things such as cooperation, care and diversity are not just more widely practised by women (Eagly, 1987), but are also desirable goals to pursue, regardless of who might find them easier to implement.

The municipalist platforms' approach to feminising politics is based on the idea that it should be applied across the board, not implemented in a specific domain or merely practised by a certain subset of women who want to see a shift in day-to-day activities. Feminisation is a project affecting all domains and dimensions of an organisation's work. Despite this cross-cutting aspect, this report focuses more on municipalist organisations than the local formal institutions they relate with. So when the latter are considered, this is done from the viewpoint of political platforms and their relations with the city councils with which they work. Thoughts about the patriarchal practices of public institutions would far exceed the scope of this report.



## THE REPORT

The report itself comprises sections on the following topics:

- I Gender balance
- II Cooperation and power relations
- III Leadership
- IV Care
- V Participation and democracy
- VI Diversity and intersectionality
- VII Non-violence.

In each section, we discuss two kinds of data: firstly, we analyse what the issues from the viewpoint of feminising politics in the context of municipalism actually are. Here, it is important to bear in mind that the report is primarily concerned with the activities and aims of municipalist platforms. Of course, many of the thoughts, challenges, practices and tools mentioned will also make sense in other kinds of organisations, e.g. social movements or non-municipalist political parties. However, the aim of this research is not to highlight such differences, but merely to critically illustrate the sometimes theoretical, sometimes more practical debates going on within the municipalist community.

We also provide a toolkit for each of the seven aforementioned topics that includes a number of practical ideas to implement in different kinds of organisations. Of course, the ease of applying these recommendations may vary depending on the specific context, so they just represent some of the many available options. Therefore, each organisation or group should draw inspiration from them, but will most probably need to adapt them to their needs and limitations.

### LET US NOW BRIEFLY DESCRIBE EACH TOPIC.

Gender balance involves striving for greater equality between women and men in occupying roles or posts, assuming responsibilities, visibly representing their organisation, wielding decision-making powers and exercising care work. If this is to be achieved, gender relations need to be carefully revised and the view that women ought to behave like men should be abandoned. We propose a series of tools and rules that implement equality, raise awareness about men's privileges, help to deconstruct masculinities and prioritise gender equality in different kinds of domains.

The second issue we discuss is the relationship between cooperation and building power in a feminist way, challenging the idea that power is something that can be imposed on others by claiming that feminist power is exercised with others, collectively and collaboratively. Furthermore, feminism aims to demonstrate that power is actually built in a collective way, too, this being something the patriarchy endeavours to conceal. Building feminist power is especially challenging for municipalist organisations operating in electoral contexts or situations under intense media scrutiny, where the main emphasis is often on vying with and seeking to destroy one's adversaries. The corresponding section of our report analyses the role of women in this domain and suggests ways of making progress. Among other things, the toolkit proposes ways of distributing responsibilities, communicating in a feminist way and strengthening group work.

The third issue covered is leadership. Feminism criticises the way leadership is commonly understood in patriarchal arrangements. We explain that this is intrinsically negative because it is driven by gender stereotypes and negatively impacts women. We consider how leadership challenges take shape in municipalist organisations that are subjected to electoral or institutional mindsets. The toolkit in this section can help to alter the style of leadership in many ways, including by making the collective visible, transferring knowledge, building bridges between public figures and other activists, and supporting female leaders.

The next topic is care, which is addressed with two different aims in mind: firstly, to foster awareness that care falls within the political, not the 'private' sphere, and secondly, to highlight who delivers care work and try to make sure the burden is shared more fairly. The section on care is divided into three subtopics: caring for dependents, caring for peers and self-care. Paying attention to these three dimensions is key to building organisations that are sustainable, habitable and democratic. The toolkit sets out a few ideas about the many resources organisations can use to work in this direction. For instance, supporting childcare and seeing men as care providers, mediation and facilitation mechanisms, a self-check questionnaire to detect burnout, and so on.

The following section suggests that participation and democracy are also essential for the feminisation of politics in municipalist organisations. This section discusses why, despite the difficulties faced by the bilateral relationship, feminism and participatory democracy are allies in the struggle against patriarchy. The main proposal made in this connection entails developing structures that favour participation and horizontal decision-making with a view to making efficiency compatible

with internal democracy. Some of the proposals in the related toolkit are geared towards the development of decision-making mechanisms that encourage participation, make things easier for newcomers and anyone who struggles to deal with traditional assembly-like environments, foster decentralisation and facilitation and combine different forms of (online and offline) engagement.

The sixth topic is diversity and intersectionality. Feminism fights against all forms of oppression, so it should not only mirror the perspective of privileged white women. Privileges are not determined solely by gender, but are unequally distributed according to additional criteria, including race, education, age, sexuality, language, physical and mental ability, class, country of origin and many others. This is why organisation needs to take account of intersectionality. Among other things, the toolkit contains ideas on how to diversify participation, assess and deal with insufficient diversity and also relate to different types of groups.

The focus of the report's seventh and final topic is on non-violence as a guiding principle for political action from a feminist perspective, addressing a lack of awareness about the different forms taken by macho violence in our societies and how to change it. Here, we set out to defend the idea of adopting a comprehensive, as opposed to purely punitive, approach. The toolkit duly makes proposals along those lines, focusing on preventing violence, supporting its victims, creating protocols, and so forth.

It is important to stress that this report does not aim to provide in-depth analysis or detailed proposals about each topic, for such an undertaking would require hundreds of pages of text and anyway, the internet is full of tools and resources. Instead, we try to present a first encounter with the various dimensions of the feminisation of politics as understood by the municipalist movement, doing so in a bid to incentivise the implementation of feminist practices in organisations that aim to build power from the bottom up, and trigger further research and creativity on the part of organisations and activists.

Regarding the toolkit, the various proposals can take different forms, namely:

- (S) PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES  
Structural changes and processes to transform organisations and the environment in which they operate.
- (R) RESOURCES  
Everything that is needed or could help to consolidate the aforementioned practices in organisations: time, labour, services, money, supplies, donations, spaces and other assets.
- (T) TRAINING  
Collective learning practices, procedures for sharing knowledge and areas of knowledge in which to exert influence.
- (C) COMMUNICATION  
All those practices and processes related to internal and external communication.
- (PT) PRACTICAL TOOLS  
The whole catalogue of practical tools (methodologies, digital tools, etc.) that can help to consolidate certain practices or carry out an action.

Some of the tools listed may need a brief explanation, an example, or some helpful nudging, which is why some are accompanied by a short section entitled "Why?", "How?" or "Did you know?", which goes into more detail.

Moreover, some tools require a careful or conscientious approach, in which case we add a 'warning' or 'beware' notice.

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At the end of the report, in the Annexes, we list some additional resources to consult, including questionnaires about care, codes of conduct, a decalogue of best practices in assemblies, and a self-assessment test on the feminisation of politics as a whole.

## CLARIFICATIONS

Before going into the report itself, it is important to clarify a few points about its language. Firstly, when using the term *feminisation*, it should be borne in mind that this is a simplification. What we are actually talking about is the '*feministisation*' or '*depatriarchalisation*' of politics, i.e. about making politics more feminist and removing patriarchy from political organisations and political practices. Feminisation refers not to *feminine* ways of doing things (although sometimes there is a link

with that, as you will discover later), but rather to *feminist* practices. Despite that, in this report the term feminisation is preferred, because it is easier to pronounce (which is no minor issue!) and also happens to be becoming mainstream wording, at least in some discourses. As with other terms (such as democracy), we can either opt to find a new term to talk about an improved vision of things or insist on appropriating an existing one. Here we choose the latter approach.

Secondly, many parts of the report refer to *men* and *women*. This choice is, again, an over-simplification (very *second-wave feminism* style). And although it conceals some important nuances, it makes our narrative easier to follow. Non-binarism is actually the approach we have in mind, but our choice of wording is geared to ensure that the report can prove useful in diverse political contexts and cultures. In addition, even in today's most *developed* environments, it is still relevant – and necessary – to talk about differences between men and women. We believe gender roles are socially constructed, not dependent on any biological characteristics. And there is a continuum between *masculine* and *feminine* ways of doing things. But women still face a hard time in some highly masculinised domains.

Thirdly, as previously mentioned, gender discrimination is not our sole concern when talking about the feminisation of politics. Intersectionality is the approach we support, because we believe reality shows that all kinds of people experience various privileges or disadvantages. Yet in spite of this, we decided to focus on gender differences, because they constitute a pervasive source of injustice, and many of the reflections and proposals derived from dealing with such injustice also have an impact on other dimensions of oppression.

Finally, we acknowledge the fact that feminism is not monolithic. In fact, talking about *feminisms* would be more accurate. But again, for simplicity's sake we chose to disguise this diversity in our text and include as many potential variants as possible. For instance, this report does not take a stand on the debates surrounding autonomy and the extent to which women's choices – influenced by patriarchy – should always be viewed as free. However, there is one version of feminism that we exclude from our approach, namely so-called '*liberal feminism*', i.e. the view that women and men should be left alone, as individuals, to pursue their projects. Among many other problems, this view does not tackle patriarchy as a source of injustice or address other kinds of privileges distinct from gender. For instance, it is an approach that benefits privileged women, but not those subjected to discrimination owing to their class, sexual orientation, disabilities, race, etc.

## METHODOLOGY

The quotations cited in the report and the discussions presented in the text are the product of a set of interviews held in June 2019 (see Annex 1 for a description of the organisations involved). The ideas covered have a longer history and were not simply dreamt up by the authors of this report or the interviewees, but rather stem from various meetings and exchanges that took place in 2018 and 2019. In particular, the toolkit is based on the results of the Feminisation of Politics project run by the Fearless Cities network from September 2018 to June 2019, with the participation of six municipal organisations from different European cities (Barcelona en Comú, Marea Atlántica, Zagreb je NAŠ!, Ne davimo Beograd, L'Asilo and M129). The authors of this report were participants in that previous project. It is important to underline this to make clear that we are just a few of very many people, dozens of women all doing their best to think, swap and implement feminist practices in their groups and with others. We just happen to be the ones documenting some debates and results, as accurately as we can.

So which kinds of organisation were involved in this study? We should begin by stressing their sheer diversity. Some of them stood in elections, some are in city government, others are in the opposition, and some work at the local level, but totally outside institutions. Some have a huge membership, others are quite small. They also operate in different political and social contexts. But what they share, despite these differences, is a municipalist approach towards politics, in other words a belief in the need to build power from the bottom up, from the local level, in a way that enables different ways of articulating formal political institutions and society. The reason these ten organisations were chosen for the interviews had to do with our desire to reflect their diversity and also with people's willingness to be involved (some other organisations we contacted said they were not interested). Of course, different case studies could have been chosen (for instance there is a striking absence of Kurdish organisations). Nonetheless we feel confident that the resulting sample neatly captures the essence of new municipalism.

Regarding the feminist aspect in particular, although not all the organisations refer to feminist practices as such (sometimes their cultural context does not permit such discourse), they all share the aim of acting in a more feminist way, but face major challenges in implementing these more feminist practices. All of them operate in political and cultural environments built on patriarchal logic and find that reality quite hard to swallow. For that reason, our report pursues two objectives: 1) to collect best practices through the toolkit (some of these tools being ideas

that organisations share, but have not yet been able to fully implement), and 2) to tell the story of the failures experienced and challenges faced by municipalist organisations. Irrespective of such difficulties, the ideas and lessons shared by them are extremely useful.

The eight main topics of this report were also chosen as a result of discussions that took place during the development of the Fearless Cities project on the feminisation of politics, although we regrouped them into fewer categories. All of them are intimately related both to feminism and to the municipalist goal of building power from the bottom up. How this can be done is set out in each individual section, but the main argument goes as follows: to build power from the bottom up, municipalism needs to oust traditional ways of doing politics (even on the left). The notions of power and leadership need to be understood in a collective, non-patriarchal way. Daily practices and procedures need to revolve around participation and care. Intersectionality and gender balance need to shine some light on how privileges and disadvantages are approached and dealt with, so that more horizontal organisations can be created. Non-violence has to be a given if people are to feel at home in political projects.

Occasionally it may seem that the issues discussed under each topic are related to or overlap with discussions appearing in other sections. The tools may also seem hard to classify because they sometimes cover more than one topic. From our point of view, this poses no problem; indeed, we feel it is inevitable, since all the issues are intimately connected, so progress made in one dimension has the potential to positively impact others, too. In other words, the 'different' topics are interlinked, and the only reason they are covered in distinct sections is to make them easier to analyse and follow.

Finally, the various tools presented in the toolkit sections below were collated during the Fearless Cities network's Feminisation of Politics project and talks or exchanges with interviewees before, during or after we put our questions to them.

GENDER

BALANCE



# I



Gender balance should be the foundations of the house and not the roof. Since structural inequality has been the norm for so many years, applying the same rules to both genders now will not solve the inequality problem. (Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

Having more women in high-profile positions or decision-making roles does not necessarily mean more feminism. It may help to improve the situation, but that is not necessarily the case and several arguments in favour of other changes are set out in other sections of this report. However, gender balance is still a necessary first step, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, because if men continue to define politics, policy issues, priorities and any action taken, this may trigger some undesirable consequences, the main one being their continued focus on patriarchal topics and agendas, thereby conditioning the respective organisation's internal dynamics and external relations. For instance, since men today are unfortunately still not usually in charge of most care work, they do not place care and other issues high up on the agenda, making it unlikely that they will be identified as top priorities.

Secondly, because if women are excluded from decision-making, the methods with which they are familiar will never become mainstream either. Of course, this claim is problematic in a number of ways. Many women who do come to occupy positions of power in today's man's world often end up assimilating masculine ways of doing things. Moreover, they probably have privileged backgrounds, making them unsuited to tackling the obstacles faced by their less advantaged peers. And let us not forget: the aim is not to make women learn how to behave like 'successful' men, but to create a more liveable political environment for everyone.

In 2017, we tried to form an electoral list comprising 100% women. The idea was to raise the issue of the place of women in political parties and prompt a public debate on the subject. By submitting that list, we spotlighted women's marginalised role in political parties, while also showing our fellow women that we were leading the charge in the gender revolution. A discussion about the appropriateness of such a proposal was also triggered in the legal domain, because a judge blocked the list's submission.  
(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

Gender balance does not only concern access to official positions. At least three other dimensions are important: the allocation of tasks and responsibilities, the distribution of time, and the visibility given to men and women.

We aim for quality when allocating tasks and roles. When there are more public actions, involving, say, the use of a microphone, there's a tendency for men to play a prominent role, either because they volunteer to do so or because women need more encouragement to take the limelight. But then it is the women who paint banners through the night. (Mandisa Shandu, Reclaim the City)

On an everyday basis, men do more of the speaking and are more involved in conversations about strategic and tactical issues. We women are there, but don't speak as much. Yet when we talk about practical and operational matters, women take the lead.  
(Iva Ivšić, Zagreb je NAŠ!)

For instance, some studies show that, when working in groups, women are more likely to take on tasks that do not lead to their promotion (Vesterlund, Babcock, Recalde, & Weingart, 2017). In general, women do the note-taking, coordinate minor tasks, prepare meetings and venues, and so on. And of course, it is women who usually provide invisible psychological support within organisations (see the section below on care). The challenge, then, is to distribute these different kinds of roles and tasks more evenly.

We won't be seeking the loss of privilege as revenge. The idea is for everyone to be better off and feel freer.  
(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)



# TOOLBOX

(S)

Set up a gender balance awareness group

**WHY?** Because before progress can be made on this issue, it must be highlighted and assessed according to a fixed internal procedure and then appropriate tools need to be developed for each context.

**HOW?** By establishing a stable group solely tasked to consider gender balance issues within an organisation. Such a group's duties may, for example, include:

- > ascertaining where gender balance is a variable in an organisation (the composition of official bodies and working groups, representation) with a view to raising awareness about the need to improve gender balance;
- > producing guidelines and training courses;
- > approving organisational charts;
- > compiling and communicating gender statistics and factsheets;
- > implementing gender budgeting processes; and
- > promoting the mapping of female experts and professionals.

**BEWARE!** Gender balance won't happen spontaneously of its own accord, so remember these key points:

- 1) Imbalances must be identified and highlighted before you can work on them.
- 2) Until someone is placed in charge of a task, often it is nobody's responsibility.
- 3) Don't reject the process. Changing the existing dynamics is more important than achieving a specific outcome.

(S)

Establish a zipper system for electoral lists and appointments to posts within organisations.

**WHY?** Because ensuring a gender balance across all candidates is not enough if men end up occupying the highest-profile posts or being the first to be elected.

**HOW?** Zipping lists is simple, though many political parties and organisations have yet to understand this. The procedure requires candidates on a list to alternate between men and women, to ensure equal representation among candidates for posts and election. Other methods for tackling under-representation of one gender include introducing a requirement that the top two candidates should not be of the same gender or setting a 40:60 ratio for every five posts on a list. It's pretty straightforward, don't you think?

(S)

Make sure to establish collective bodies that comprise at least 50% women for any key positions.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

The system implemented in municipalities in Kurdistan by the People's Democratic Party (HDP) stipulates a joint male-female co-presidency. In 2019, this system led to the party gaining power in 58 municipalities, on 24 occasions with winning women candidates. All these municipalities will be jointly co-chaired by male and female incumbents.

(S)

Ensure that at least 50% of newly hired personnel (in organisations and public institutions where you are represented) are women.

**WHY?** Some studies suggest a bias in favour of hiring (certain) male applicants for positions, as opposed to women or people from minorities, e.g. disabled persons or immigrants (Riach & Rich, 2002).

**HOW?** Public contracting laws are gradually introducing EU law on social requirements regarding gender equality in public procurement contracts, though similar clauses can also be implemented outside the public domain. The Observatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life<sup>1</sup> has proposed some simple guidelines.

**BEWARE!** Ensuring balanced representation is just one objective. Any routine procedures that make women invisible or disempower them based on their particularities must be neutralised. For example, as stated above, women tend to assume less visible tasks that do not lead to openings for promotion. So it makes sense to classify tasks as invisible (not leading to promotion, as in the care sector) or visible (leading to promotion, e.g. spokesperson) and monitor who assumes these roles, so that they can be controlled and balanced.

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1 Imposing requirements on Gender Equality in public procurement contracts: [www.charter-equality.eu/exemple-de-bonnes-pratiques/imposing-requirements-on-gender-equality-in-public-procurement-contracts.html](http://www.charter-equality.eu/exemple-de-bonnes-pratiques/imposing-requirements-on-gender-equality-in-public-procurement-contracts.html) (05.03.2020).

(S)(C)

Make sure that women should account for at least 50% of people at roundtables and public events and that men refuse to be part of all-male panels.

**WHY?** Men not only tend to be invited as speakers more frequently than women, they also accept such invitations more readily. Check the hashtag #allmalepanel on Twitter and draw your own conclusions!

**HOW?** Make sure you always invite more women than men to your events and roundtables. Also refuse to send men to events or presentations where all the participants are male. Connected to this, it is important for women to network more, so that more female profiles become visible and women gain greater recognition and status.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Women are more likely to turn down invitations to participate in public events. Moreover, even when they accept such invitations, they are more likely than men to drop out at the last minute. One reason is so called 'impostor syndrome', whereby people feel insufficiently qualified to take on certain responsibilities or accept certain jobs – see the «Leadership» section for more detailed information). Another reason is that women are more likely to have other responsibilities (such as providing care). This is why more women always need to be invited if you want to end up with equal gender representation at your event.

(S)

Favour female candidates in applications for one-person posts or for bodies with odd numbers of members.

**WHY?** Because otherwise men will retain a greater presence, status and power. There are usually more male candidates for any (especially high-profile) post, and it is important to ensure that women are also equally represented.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The statutes of the political platform Zagreb je NAŠ! (Zagreb is OURS!) stipulate that whenever a leadership structure or team requires an odd number of members (e.g. three, five, etc.), the balance should fall in women's favour.

(PT)

Use tools to measure gender participation, the duration of spoken contributions by women and men and even the topics or issues raised by women speakers. Track and follow up those results to analyse participation in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

**WHY?** Gender-balanced time allocation depends on the use of devices that reveal and reverse the dynamics of unequal time management in relation to tasks, spoken contributions in assemblies or representation in high-profile spaces.

**HOW?** Keep track of the number of contributions and the total time taken up by men and women and share your findings with everyone at the end of every meeting. Check these online tools: Gender Avenger<sup>2</sup>, Timeoff<sup>3</sup>, Woman interrupted<sup>4</sup> and Gendertimer<sup>5</sup>.

2 GenderAvenger: [www.genderavenger.com/tally](http://www.genderavenger.com/tally) (05.03.2020).

3 Progressive Timekeeper: <https://timeoff.intertwinkles.org> (05.03.2020).

4 Woman Interrupted App: <https://womaninterruptedapp.com/en> (05.03.2020).

5 GenderTimer: <http://se.gendertimer.com/en/what-is-gendertimer> (05.03.2020).



(R)

Map experts per domain to avoid masculinising expertise, spaces or tasks.

**WHY?** Because people tend to think men are better at certain tasks than women, and female experts tend to render 'invisibilised'. For example, see the path travelled since 2010 by Equalisters<sup>6</sup>, a Swedish non-profit platform striving to change assumptions about who we think of as experts (white men) and providing concrete evidence that expert women, immigrants and other diverse voices do indeed exist in very many domains.

**HOW?** Ask your friends. List your members, those of other collectives, self-employed people, associations and experts by topics. Who are they? What kind of work do they do? How can they best be reached? Then keep that information public for the group. This aspect must be integrated into a pedagogical approach adopted within the space in question to train the respective group to seek and identify solutions.



(R)

Always analyse activities  
or projects from a gender  
perspective.

- HOW?** The 3R method (for analysing an activity in terms of gender equality, on the basis of Representation, Resources and Realia) is a strategy for achieving equality between women and men by focusing on:
- a) who makes decisions;
  - b) who has access to which resources; and
  - c) how a) and b) are determined.

This is a complex process that requires time and efficient procedures for accounting and processing information, but the results are extremely revealing. You can start by gender analysing a specific project, then go on to tackle more expansive activities. See the JamKöm<sup>7</sup> toolbox for some simple methods. This is an area where progress needs to be made, so let's generate the requisite knowledge together!

(S)(PT)

Create a working group to work on masculinities.

**HOW?** You can start by holding non-mixed meetings to generate some ideas as a group and then try applying basic concepts like those set out in a guide by Emakunde<sup>8</sup>. You can also search for groups of male experts working on masculinities in your community and invite them along to your meetings.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Initiatives like the MenEngage network, MenCare, AHIGE in Spain, or The Huddle in Toronto are working examples of these kinds of male group. Check out this simple tool: An Average Man<sup>9</sup>.

(C)

Always bear the gender perspective in mind in communications.

**HOW?** Identify the experts in communication and gender in your organisation and form a group. Then collect information from social media and analyse it from a feminist perspective. Also, talk to other organisations working on this issue. Finally, plan the form external communications should take in the future.

**BEWARE!** Gender-sensitive communication involves much more than using inclusive language: it entails avoiding stereotyping (including in images) and exclusionary forms, ensuring that communications are sensitive to diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation, providing sex-disaggregated data where possible, including stories and experiences that portray the situation faced by women, and so on.

8 Men, Equality, New Masculinities, Guides: [www.emakunde.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/gizonduz\\_dokumentuak/es\\_def/adjuntos/men\\_equality\\_news\\_masculinities.pdf](http://www.emakunde.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/gizonduz_dokumentuak/es_def/adjuntos/men_equality_news_masculinities.pdf) (05.03.2020).

9 An Average Man: [www.includegender.org/toolbox/exercises/an-average-man](http://www.includegender.org/toolbox/exercises/an-average-man) (05.03.2020).

(PT)

Arrange mandatory training and education on gender and equality for anyone occupying a position of responsibility (inside an organisation or public institution).

**WHY?** Because this is a great opportunity to expose people to this kind of training. Usually, when gender and equality training courses are offered, most participants are women, yet it's men who need it the most!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The municipalist organisation Marea Atlántica (in A Coruña, Spain) has been implementing this for years now, particularly for members of the organisation occupying institutional posts.

(S)

Diagnose gender equality in your organisation to highlight and challenge any evidence of patriarchal practices.

28 |

**WHY?** Because you need to know where you stand and which challenges you still face before you can decide what action to take.

**HOW?** If possible, have the analysis carried out by an experienced, external professional. Otherwise, ask other organisations who may already have done this kind of work for advice.

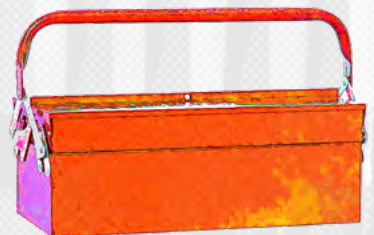
**DID YOU KNOW?**

The citizens' platform Barcelona en Comú developed a Gender Diagnosis in 2017.

(S)

Don't allow 'bigger' issues to delay feminist work within your organisation.

**HOW?** Make sure feminism is on your organisation's agenda and that you receive political backing from any internal governing bodies. Words won't change reality, but publicly announcing any compromises or writing them down in a kind of manifesto may help. When launching a new project or campaign, include the feminist dimension from the very beginning (mainstreaming) and make sure that the working group includes members with a feminist perspective.



COOPERATION  
& POWER  
RELATIONS

# II



Strategically, we propose a cross-cutting approach of feminist practices within our organisation. In the midst of the feminist revolution, organisations need to decide whether or not they will back it or try to hold it back and suppress it (Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura).

Feminist perspectives criticise the idea of power as ‘power over’, i.e. power based on domination, imposition or control. As Amy Allen put it: «many feminists from a variety of theoretical backgrounds have argued for a reconceptualisation of power as a capacity or ability, specifically, the capacity to empower or transform oneself and others» (Allen, 2016). This means shifting from a conception of power as ‘power over’ to a conception of power as ‘power to achieve’: power as empowerment.

Building power in a feminist way means sharing that power. When you are in a strongly patriarchal society it comes naturally for men to dominate. Power doesn’t come to women; we need to take it. Not because men intentionally grab power, but because this is ‘how things have always been’. We need to empower each other, so we need processes that give everyone a say, acknowledge each other and share responsibilities. Otherwise, the loudest and most persistent will end up having the highest profiles. (Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

A feminist view of power assigns equal value to all approaches regarding how to be and act and ensuring that they all have space to flourish. (Ana Andzersen, We Brussels)

32 |

Regarding these feminist conceptions of power, cooperation occupies a central role, based on a critique of exercising it by imposing it. Although not usually considered a feminist in the literature, Hannah Arendt neatly describes power as «the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert» (Arendt, 1970, p. 44).

The challenge for the feminist project, then, is to promote gender equality, though not merely by giving anyone in a disadvantaged situation the same responsibilities, profile or status as dominant parties, but by viewing these things as resources that can be allocated to individual people. As explained in the previous section,



gender balance is important, but it is not enough, as liberal feminists would argue, to have women command the same resources as men. Imposition and subordination are not practices that women need to learn in order to catch up with men. So the aim is not merely to wrest these resources from cisgender men with certain social and economic characteristics and reassign them to others, but to radically change society's power structure.

What can we do to make sure that liberal feminism doesn't permeate our organisations? First, there's critique, then vision, then strategy. But in parallel we need to build new kinds of bonds, which have to be politicised. This point is intimately linked to municipalism: going from daily experience to politics. However, the big question is how to make sure our actions go beyond personal catharsis and are genuinely taken on board. The challenge is to politicise our experiences. We need to transcend our individual situations and convey the issues into the political domain. If we can't do that, we won't make progress.  
(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

Competition is a masculinised social construct strongly embodied in politics. It has transcended external political processes and permeated organisations. Approaches based on exclusive leadership, the accumulation of power, loyalty and uncritical fidelity have been consolidated by the patriarchal conception of power. It is essential to break through these mindsets because they have damaging consequences for organisations and their members, causing divisions, sowing distrust and constantly stimulating competition. Fostering cooperation within spaces and organisations is a practice that favours the construction of horizontal relationships by valuing the collective intelligence of the group to attain a common good instead of pursuing individual interests and engaging in competition between equals. Having mechanisms that guarantee the predominance of this type of relationship empowers people in spaces that allow collective contributions.

Feminist power would be distributed, based on horizontal relationships. Over the past few years, we felt intimidated to keep quiet. Organisations geared towards self-preservation, maintaining their public discourse, and so on, tend to become closed in on themselves and mistrust outsiders.  
(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

The idea that cooperation, not confrontation, should guide organisations' internal practices might put women – especially those defending the practical implementation of feminism – in a difficult position. On the one hand, according to the experience of municipalist organisations (but also many others) women are often ignored when they demand changes in this connection. There are usually 'more important things' to do. Frequently, demands expressed through confrontational approaches and practices are the ones that command most attention from decision-makers, even when the whole group or organisation is involved. On the other hand, if women decide to grab people's attention by adapting to and even adopting patriarchal methods (e.g. resorting to confrontation), they are marked as 'bad feminists', especially by people who are not exponents of feminism themselves. These women then face a dilemma: either they adapt to such mindsets to call attention to the feminist agenda, or they stick to feminist methods and risk remaining on the sidelines of decision-making.

34 |

We need to build feminist power that is not based on competition, annihilation, violence and muting dialogue. But there is a moment for making decisions, even imperfect ones. Feminist decision-making entails assuming that each decision is the best possible under the circumstances, but that we'll continue thinking about the issue and considering when the next right moment has come to take a further decision.  
(Aurea Carolina, Muitas)

At least two remarks are worth making about such a situation. Firstly, rejecting confrontation and defending cooperation does not mean being naïve, stupid or insufficiently strategically minded. As feminism also teaches us, conflict is part of life, because we are all in different situations and people's experiences and ideas vary. Women should not be forced to construct veiled power relations

when faced with difficulties of exercising actual, visible, recognised forms of power. The challenge, then, is to recognise conflicts when they arise, put them on the table and then deal with them in the most feminist way possible.

We aren't very optimistic [about the possibility of building feminist power]. I think we have the awareness and the tools, but for other power relations to become a reality, those who have power or legitimacy and end up monopolising decision-making must also be made aware of that power.  
(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

Secondly, as Amelia Valcárcel put it, women have a «right to evil» (Valcárcel, 2012), meaning they should not be forced to comply with behavioural standards that men are unwilling to apply to themselves. They should not be expected to be more cooperative, nicer or more feminist than their male peers (although they normally are), and they should not be criticised more harshly than men if they fail. Otherwise, they will bear a dual burden of, on the one hand, having to resort to more energy-consuming behaviour and, on the other hand, fighting discrimination against them due to being women. This applies even more to women who are subjected to intersectional forms of discrimination, because they are also poor, uneducated, have immigrant status, etc.

Ideally, a cooperative approach should permeate every dimension of political action, both internally and externally. One major problem here, though, is that municipalist organisations, regardless of how feminist they are, operate in a highly competitive environment where power still hinges on patriarchal criteria. Contexts in which political parties compete for public support set the rules for a highly demanding and aggressive contest, especially during elections. Yet there is always some leeway for doing things differently, and the key here is to be creative and exploit it.

We ran two different types of campaign. In 2015, the message was that mayoral candidate Manuela Carmena was in tune with Madrid's citizens. The context was feminist, being quite diverse, decentralised and working as a network. In 2019, the patriarchalised campaign was totally focused on the candidates, with priority given to media actions, not mobilisation. So people didn't feel they owned the campaign. If you only play the representative game, people participate in an all-or-nothing manner, arguing "either I'm useful to you or not". There are no different ways of thinking and participating (Alejandra Calvo, M129).

One of the great challenges here is to maintain a collaborative, as opposed to a confrontational, discourse. Instead of aiming to destroy other political parties or actors, a more feminist approach would entail speaking more constructively and inclusively. There is evidence that women also feel more at home with this approach than men (Ennser-Jedenastik, Dolezal, & Müller, 2017; Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 1997).

Another major challenge is how to engage in negotiations with other political actors in less confrontational, more constructive ways. How this might be done is still a mystery to most organisations.

We need to find a way out of traditional approaches for dealing with conflicts. How we negotiated the mandato colectivo (collective mandate) reflects these difficulties and challenges facing feminist power. We know it's necessary [to find these new ways] but we're not always able to achieve it. (Áurea Carolina, Muitas)

When we need to engage in 'diplomatic relations' as an organisation, we do so as a group, not as individuals. And we do it in a gender-balanced way. Women find cooperating easier; if meetings were left entirely to men, there would be a risk of them turning into testosterone-fuelled clashes, even if the men in question were feminists.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

Finally, one of the greatest barriers to cooperation (and other feminist practices) is that it takes time: time to build trust, discuss matters, reach decisions and finally act in concert. Nevertheless, the experience of most municipalist organisations has involved trying to achieve several different aims simultaneously, generating a sense that there was no time to do things how they wanted.

For them, urgent matters included building an organisation, recruiting members, negotiating with social movements, running for election, fending off external attacks, securing visibility in the media, to name but a few. Having struggled to do all these things in a cooperative way that allowed for the establishment of relational power, organisations frequently found themselves riddled with stress and confrontation.

We found ourselves in a very difficult situation because of contextual requirements, the precarious situation we all faced, and the fact that we had entered the municipal government and suddenly found ourselves 'inside', with no time for our organisation to generate its own autonomy and legitimacy. As a result, urgent matters took precedence over important ones.  
(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)





# TOOLBOX

(S)

Responsibilities should be assigned to groups, not individuals

**WHY?** Because competition penalises women more than men, and cooperation is a mechanism that enables the generation of collective power.

**HOW?** Use working committees for most tasks, from logistics to communication, thematic issues and, of course, decision-making.

**BEWARE!** Collective responsibility can sometimes mean that no one feels responsible. So make sure someone is in charge of coordinating activities, without taking on the role of 'boss'.

(S)

Make diplomacy a group issue, not an individual role.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In M129, it is groups, not individuals, who are in charge of the organisation's diplomatic relations.

(C)

Produce alternatives to confrontational discourses. Communicate assertively, but in a non-aggressive way.

**WHY?** Sometimes the easiest way to build consensus is to produce confrontational narratives against a common 'enemy', in an 'us or them' scenario. Instead of doing this, which can damage the dynamics of communication, try to establish new campaigning methods by explaining your political statements, based on participative, common agreement.

**HOW?** Check the assertive language zine produced by OTR Bristol<sup>10</sup> and especially bear these tips in mind not only when campaigning, but in your daily, informal communications via social networks or instant messaging apps.

(S)

Arrange '*Intertavoli*', i.e. open assemblies that share projects and promote multidisciplinary, cross-cutting projects by merging different working groups.

**WHY?** Merging groups allows roles to be exchanged and prevents the monopolisation of tasks. It also favours the transfer of transversal knowledge about the organisation and its structure and highlights the value of hidden or often overlooked jobs that are often done by women.

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10 Assertive communication: [www.otrbristol.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/November-Assertive-Communication.pdf](http://www.otrbristol.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/November-Assertive-Communication.pdf) (05.03.2020).

(C)

Drive forward strategic, feminist communication.

**WHY?** Mainstream (and often even alternative) media do not reflect the depth, breadth and richness of ongoing processes around the world entailing the feminisation of politics.

**HOW?** It is vital to devise your own media agenda and communication strategy and network with journalists, influencers and media platforms to produce your own messages.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

One clear example of this is the 8M Communication Committee in Spain, which staged an unprecedented feminist strike largely by successfully setting a common agenda across the country. Cooperative processes and nationwide deliberations led to the consensual adoption of strategic communication guidelines by different groups and territories.

(C)

Ensure that communications teams focus in particular on verifying and testing the use of inclusive language.

**WHY?** Because it's easy to be detrimentally influenced by ways of speaking that are pervasive in our society.



(PT)

Think about power.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

We Brussels held an internal nurture workshop on feminism and power.

**BEWARE!**

Normally, these kinds of events are not attended by those who need them the most (people with a greater say in decision-making). You need to find a way of including everyone.

(R)(PT)

Use cultural and artistic activities to establish firm bonds between different people and organisations.

**WHY?**

Artistic and cultural activities are engines of participation and self-expression, providing access to power structures and working groups by enabling people to engage with and get to know each other in a more open, less aggressive fashion. Such activities can constitute very useful sources of contacts for people initially hesitant about entering political structures, especially women, immigrants, young people, and others traditionally excluded from power structures. These activities also raise the profiles of various artists and producers and promote egalitarian culture.

**HOW?**

See L' Asilo's<sup>11</sup> Declaration of Public Use.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

M129 organises ballroom dancing lessons twice a week as a tool for body empowerment, team building and to engage its members and friends via participation in an invigorating, fun activity.

11 Dichiarazione d'uso civico e collettivo urbano: [www.exasilofilangieri.it/regolamento-du-so-civico](http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/regolamento-du-so-civico) (05.03.2020).

(R)

Eat, drink,  
and party together.

**WHY?** Because relaxing and having fun helps to break down tensions. The members of We Brussels eat or cook together. This provides both physical and mental nourishment.

**HOW?** You probably know how!

**DID YOU KNOW?** L' Asilo places special emphasis on working at meetings and spaces outside the organisation. Dinners are held after every assembly, and sometimes there is a Sunday lunch or dinner, too. By the way, if you want to learn more about the power of cooking, check out Pennsylvania's Conflict Kitchen<sup>12</sup>.

(PT)

Take a moment  
to meditate together.

**HOW?** Find someone who experienced at leading meditation and spare a few minutes during meetings or activities to focus on your breathing and calm down.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Meditation reshapes our brains, making us more compassionate and reducing stress. This makes it a great way of reducing aggression and embracing cooperation.

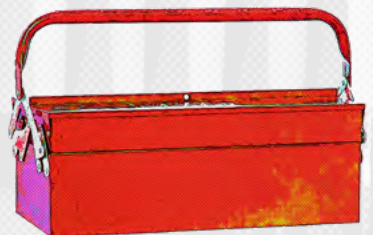
**BEWARE!** Many people find these kinds of practice ridiculous or uncomfortable. We are all used to being active or vocal all the time, so remaining silent takes us out of our comfort zone. Ask everyone to be patient and remain open to the experience. You can always remind them, too, that some people don't feel comfortable with other practices (like talking too loudly or aggressively during meetings), but don't complain!

(S)

Build collective support for your feminist struggles.

**WHY?** Women who challenge patriarchal structures are often criticised for being 'divisive' and sometimes also accused of exaggerating situations or publicly airing personal conflicts. On many occasions, political projects proposed by women, especially those addressing gender, have to be validated by men. On the other hand, women are often made fully responsible for implementing feminist agendas, without being given any support. When you build alliances with other women's groups, try to do so in non-tokenising ways.

**HOW?** Never fight alone. Build support groups, working groups and safe spaces, whether formal or of a more 'ninja' style. For instance, you could set up a feminist chat group to offer support to any individual woman who finds herself in a conflict situation, or organise decentralised actions to address issues and exert political pressure through different channels. Be clever and think strategically!





# III



Implementing our feminist discourse has been quite difficult.  
Persuading organisations to take feminism on board is an  
uphill struggle and there's still a lot of work to be done.  
(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

Social role theory suggests that leadership has traditionally been the province of men, because it is they who are more closely associated with agency. Women's roles, by contrast, have been viewed as more communal and nurturing. However, as with the discussion of power, the conclusion reached definitely depends on what we understand by the term 'leader'.

Feminism does not necessarily reject leadership and its usefulness, but it certainly criticises patriarchal leadership, according to which leaders are executive, infallible, make no mistakes, always know better and are entitled to take decisions without consulting others. Feminist leadership, regardless of the gender of the people exercising it, is based, amongst other things, on relations, recognises everyone's mutual dependency, and is fallible and unafraid of acknowledging mistakes. These different styles of leadership have also been identified to be more common among men and women respectively (Maier, 1999).

The movement has a distinctly flat structure, which sets it apart from similar organisations. Otherwise, when individuals lead in traditional ways, it's a hostile environment. Here, women are not only leading, but are also the people most affected by the issues we address. So there's a sense of joint responsibility and shared care.  
(Mandisa Shandu, Reclaim the City)

Feminist leadership should facilitate, embodying collective power and joint intelligence and work. A feminist leader, whether male or female, listens and brings people together.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

'A leader in every chair' is how we understand feminist leadership.  
(Ana Andzersen, We Brussels)

The leader needs to be part of the team. She is not the 'coach' of a sports team, directing from the outside, telling others what to do.

I personally prefer to be called a 'captain', like in a football team. This means playing alongside the rest of the team. A captain can also make mistakes during a game and be criticised for it. But she has an integral, strategic vision, coupled with a responsibility to know others and give them the trust they need. Feminist leadership means decentralising power, recognising that people are also vulnerable bodies, have feelings and can err. Leaders also have a greater responsibility to take care of others, because if they mistreat someone, the impact can be disproportionately high. In conflict situations, they also need to take care to use their position to promote greater equality, not less. And of course they must not take advantage of their position of power.

(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

We deeply value feminine leadership (expressing emotions, admitting to mistakes, etc.), but in a day-to-day context we tend to value masculine leadership methods, based on how much time a person has to dedicate to an issue, how much stress she can handle and other factors.

(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

Here are some reasons to reject patriarchal leadership. Firstly, it is intrinsically negative and undemocratic, more likely to lead to mistakes (collective intelligence is definitely smarter than any individual), less stable (because if something happens to the leader, the whole group is affected), more vulnerable (an individual is easier to attack than a group) and traditionally tends to be power-centralizing and aggressive towards individuals. And these are just a few of a long list of problems!

Secondly, since this form of leadership is a consequence of social gender stereotypes, women who try to behave in these ways suffer the 'backlash effect', for instance being seriously penalised whenever they express emotions, as well as when they express no emotions at all (Brescoll, 2016).

The situation in Serbia is quite tough. The emergence of strong women always prompts a strong public backlash, especially when the focus is on feminist issues, but also in general. Women always face the risk of verbal and psychological violence. One of our leaders was even hit by a man. We also receive threats and are subjected to stalking and all kinds of gender-related violence. Men from our organisation are insulted, but aren't subjected to the same, specific forms of violence, like sexual harassment and objectivisation. And when women are more assertive, the violence just gets worse.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

Thirdly, and closely connected to the above, because of 'impostor syndrome', a condition that affects women more than men (Clance & Imes, 1978), it is hard to find women willing to step up and lead if they feel that too much is being asked of them. It is quite common for women to feel less qualified than their (sometimes less qualified) male peers to take on certain responsibilities or jobs. The challenge, then, is to offer leaders of both genders the possibility of exercising a different kind of leadership style, so that they feel more at home in a leading role, as leaders who are supported by their group, feel free to express their feelings, and can make mistakes without being punished (at least not by those involved in their joint project).

It used to be hard to find the right men and women, and a tough decision for activists to enter institutional politics. It's not like in other organisations, where you always have a low profile. It's a different kind of experience. Women have fear. We only do things we know we can do. When we feel insecure, we feel we first need to gather experience, which is unlike men in organisations and also in general. Men are bolder about taking on tasks or duties they don't know how to perform. And if they do something wrong, public opinion won't be so critical towards them.  
(Iva Ivšic, Zagreb je NAŠ!)



Unfortunately, in a high-pressure political context, such as the conditions under which municipalist organisations operate, leadership tends to be exercised in traditional patriarchal ways, and usually by men. Although some progress has been made in this regard, for municipalist platforms there is still a long way to go before alternative ways of leading that differ from those followed in mainstream politics become established. Typically, men as individuals tend to have higher profiles when negotiating with other political parties or organisations, dealing with sensitive issues in the media, which relegates the collective, the women and other disadvantaged people to a secondary role.

After entering the institution, there was a tendency to assign greater importance to elected representatives when it came to making decisions and boosting our external visibility. The representative system only recognises these power relations, which are what it demands. From a feminist point of view, however, being elected is incidental: it is other people who put you there and do the real work.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

There are 'adult' moments in classical politics when we succumb to the usual dynamics. Negotiations are a man's game, and if there's a woman involved it's because of the gender quota. But at critical moments, it is men who make decisions. The solution is not to have more women, but to add more perspectives to each question. We need to be positive about knowing that we can deal with 'adult situations' from different viewpoints. We would reach different solutions, not outcomes stemming from an analysis that is quite poor, endogamic, rooted in political theory and far removed from reality.  
(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

At this point in time, men are running the show because women are burnt out. Male dominance is particularly prevalent with regard to speaking and making decisions. We still have a lot of work to do. Right now, a lot of invisible work is done by women and non-dominant men.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

However, there are alternative ways of understanding leadership that do not fit into the stereotype of the 'infallible' strong man. For instance, leadership can be collective, not individual. Groups can lead, too, and this is a great opportunity to include diversity in leadership within organisations. In addition, there is the possibility of having individual leaders, but more with a view to coordinating and managing others, not to deciding on their own. Finally, there is leeway to develop new forms of leadership based on different kinds of knowledge and on taking action, rather than merely thinking or stating one's opinion (which is a typically masculine practice).

The four of us [working in representative institutions] consult the collective all the time. Even though our styles differ, we always base our work on the team advising us. The speed of legislative work makes this absolutely essential. We respect the structure of the mandato, even though we sometimes fail to do it justice, but we have deep respect for collective compromise. This is very different to how men behave vis-à-vis their work colleagues. They have ideas, but are too individualistic, and their advisors 'serve' them, an approach that is inconceivable for us.  
(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)

Since this kind of organisation is represented in public institutions, there is an inevitable gap between insiders and outsiders, which sometimes deepens.  
(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

The first week after the election, out of 12 published press articles, only one was by a woman, who wrote about feminism, a topic not even mentioned in the others. The articles published by men came out two days after the election, with no time to reflect about what had just happened. And their content was actually the product of discussions within the group, not of individual reflection, capitalising on collective processes and increasing masculine visibility.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

In any case, the challenge is to create mechanisms that balance the weight of traditional forms of leadership and bring decision-making back to the community, while at the same time promoting new forms of leadership not based on patriarchal stereotypes.

The longer we stay trapped in public institutions, the more bureaucracy and restrictions that environment imposes on us. This is quite important and merits attention, lest it slowly saps the life out of us and undermines our radicality. This is why it is very important to switch leaders every now and then.  
(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)



feminism isn't just a woman's thing.

# TOOLBOX

(S)

*Affidamento*, as a form of leadership, postulates exchange-based relationships between women, with some helping others to realise their desires or projects.

**WHY?** It is a social and political practice in which action replaces neutrality. It is designed to highlight the shared nature of a cause, establish a relationship of trust with another woman and recognise her authority and knowledge. Nuria Varela says *affidamento* can be translated as trusting or leaving an issue in someone else's hands. This creates strong bonds between women, who give each other trust and authority, re-establishing the female authority not existing in patriarchy.<sup>13</sup>

52 |

**HOW?** By delegating and building trusted networks to develop common tasks together from an empowering perspective. Using approaches set out in this leadership toolkit may help.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

The first time this concept was used was in 1983, in a magazine run by feminist groups in Milan (Sottosopra).

13 Feminismo de la diferencia: <http://nuriavarela.com/feminismo-de-la-diferencia> (05.03.2020).



**(C) (PT)**

Internal and external communication from a collective perspective, trying to raise the profile of the team, not just its leaders.

**HOW?** Empathise with and be aware of all the people involved in each task, team or idea. Ideas are rarely individual, especially when it comes to implementing them. Let's highlight that! When writing and speaking, a good rule to keep in mind is to make consistent, intentional, respectful language choices. «*The communications team needs some help with the event tonight*» sounds way better than «*Michael wants someone to work on tonight's event*», doesn't it? Set some guidelines on the use of inclusive language and images, like those developed by the University of Pittsburgh<sup>14</sup>. Highlight teamwork using plural pronouns, avoiding aggressive, confrontational language.

14 Gender-Inclusive / Non-Sexist Language Guidelines and Resources: <http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432> (05.03.2020).

(PT)

List people's availabilities in line with your organisation's requirements, so that people can volunteer to serve in the roles required by each event, activity, or process.

WHY?

This will make you aware of your members' availabilities, avoid burdening any individual with the work of disseminating and inviting people to take up certain duties (since everyone should feel responsible for signing up for those tasks of their own accord) and simultaneously update your processes.

(S)(PT)

Foster female mentoring.

54 |

WHY?

Traditionally, most mentors have been older men, seen as role models, who transfer knowledge and experience, thereby strengthening and thus perpetuating the hierarchies and status codes of patriarchal structures. To break this trend, let's move towards new ways of mentoring, using it as a tool that encourages inclusion and participation, based on exchanges and dialogue, to achieve common goals together.

(S)

Make sure that technical and political knowledge and responsibility are transferred.

**WHY?** Because rotation and the sharing of responsibilities are important. If only one individual knows how to do something, it's hard to sustain the performance of that task, avoid overburdening the person in question and build collective power.

**HOW?** By performing tasks (particularly important or sensitive ones) together with others, rotating as much as possible and holding workshops and laboratories to share technical and policymaking expertise with the other people in the group. Rotate roles, delegate tasks and let information flow and be stored in public repositories so that everyone can access it. Carefully ponder tasks (responsibilities, time, complexity) to create effective and sustainable structures. See the rotating tasks dynamic in the ZEMOS98 paper on the Pedagogy of Care<sup>15</sup>.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

This is how We Brussels understands feminist leadership, appointing a new coordinator (of meetings and work) every week. It is a way of reinforcing ownership of the project and equalising the situation faced by new people, as this technique invites everyone to take as much responsibility as possible.

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<sup>15</sup> Pedagogy of care: [http://zemos98.org/descargas/Care\\_OpenPaper\\_ZEMOS98.pdf](http://zemos98.org/descargas/Care_OpenPaper_ZEMOS98.pdf) (05.03.2020).

(S)

Implement positive/affirmative action mechanisms and bust myths about them.

**WHY?** Because it takes direct intervention to resolve some imbalanced, unfair situations.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

A lack of awareness and confidence about the effectiveness of affirmative action remains one of the main obstacles to its use. Despite the myths and prejudices about it and the resistance to it, positive discrimination is based on compensatory measures geared towards achieving parity, not taking revenge. However, it will take quite some time to reach this objective!

(S)

Build support groups for those in positions of responsibility.

**WHY?** Because when facing internal or external crises, support is much needed and greatly appreciated. Having a support group is positive, not just for having a team able to take responsibilities and assume key tasks if the person/persons in charge are overwhelmed, but also because it provides emotional and practical support (e.g. easing social anxiety, designing communication strategies, or preventing individuals from 'feeling alone').



**(R)(PT)**

Work and reflect on power and privileges, explore their limits, how they work and end up perpetuating male leadership. Develop an understanding of privileges we may not realise we have and/or that we take for granted.

**HOW?** There are plenty of interactive ways of acknowledging and exploring personal and collective power and privilege. The basic idea involves drawing up a list of statements associated with leadership and disempowerment (i.e. education, the use of public spaces, the use of speaking time, media messages, sustainability, etc.) and asking participants to based their performance on their experience regarding these claims, for instance by taking a step backwards if they don't feel represented and forwards if they do. At the end of the session, you should be able to see how privilege works and identify the barriers to female leadership in different settings (society, an organisation, a specific group, etc.).

**(C)**

Preserve women's history and present by showcasing female leadership

**HOW?** Keep track of any relevant activities, interviews, documentaries, conferences, training workshops and other events, quote them and spread the news about them on social networks.

(PT)

Reflect as a group on the so-called '*impostor syndrome*' and how it affects women in leading roles

**WHY?** Sharing common experiences about how women feel when assuming leading roles is a step towards overcoming doubts and insecurities based on stereotypes and messages that prevent women from exercising leadership. What is leadership? And what is not leadership? This issue needs to be addressed not from the neoliberal and individualistic standpoint often used to talk about powerful women and their lonely, exacting path to leadership, but from the viewpoint of collective empowerment, the vindication of female references and criticism of political practices that generate backlashes.

(PT)

Develop training courses on negotiation and conflict resolution strategies from a feminist perspective.

**WHY?** Feminists have long challenged the absence and exclusion of women's experiences, voices, and perspectives at the negotiating table. Gendered socialisation has put women in a different position to devise creative approaches to conflict resolution. Moreover, conflicts are rarely gender-neutral, so a critical, feminist approach is needed to provide solutions for social transformation that differ from the traditional masculinised concept of negotiation.

(S)(C)

Make public faces  
accessible.

**WHY?** The public faces or leaders of collective projects must be in touch with activists and generate a mutual, correlative network. If leaders or public faces remain aloof, they will ultimately be ousted and the people working on that project will become frustrated.

**HOW?** Promote collaborative communication, come up with collective arguments or storylines, let people be part of the process by contributing creatively, arrange public meetings to connect with and talk to people outside the project, etc.

**WHY?** As Caren Tepp from Ciudad Futura says, people who serve as referents, i.e. the visible faces of a project, need to build a bidirectional relationship of trust, closeness, proximity and non-judgementalism. This change is important, both for referents and everyone else, and everyone within an organisation should feel responsible for bringing it about.



CARE

# IV



A recent study concluded that «even if [social organisations] govern themselves in a more horizontal way than other social structures, the space they grant for care and sustainability of life is often at risk, at the bottom of the list of priorities.» (ZEMOS98, 2019).

In particular, municipalist organisations active in an electoral context often find themselves in a pretty competitive, exacting environment that exposes them to external and internal criticism. Since, like other politically oriented organisations in the representative system, they depend on public support to function, this political context sets their agenda and requires them to react quickly to a changing environment or – so it is believed – the public will punish them. Care work is often relegated to a lower level of importance because it requires time and attention. Care work is not directed towards attaining specific political goals, but rather at strengthening and supporting people and groups. This makes it easy to put off dealing with it when faced with urgent day-to-day political issues.

The notions of care and care work are becoming increasingly mainstream in current political discussions on the left. But whereas social organisations are good at adapting rhetorically to talking about care, they are failing to transform such discourse into practical measures that model a new material reality for them (ZEMOS98, 2019, p. 5).



As an organisation, we just realised how important this is.

Until now we'd been swimming against the tide, responding to political situations, and so on. This affected our activists, especially those who were more exposed.

We've now realised that we really need to pay attention to care, but have to acquire knowledge in order to do so properly.

(Natalija Simovic, *Ne davimo Beograd*)

The question is how to ensure the reproduction of life, not as a responsibility of women, but from a feminist perspective also concerned with this as a necessary condition for managing everything else. We need to bring this 'quieter' part of life back to the centre. We need time to take care of our health, read and so on, so that exercising formal political power doesn't drain anyone's energy.

(Áurea Carolina, *Muitas*)

There's a struggle between community building and action, a struggle between processes and results.

(Ana Andzersen, *We Brussels*)

We considered holding a workshop on care and how power affects us, but never did it because it's not a priority. There's always more urgent and important stuff to take care of.

(Alejandra Calvo, *M129*).

The concept has a range of meanings and dimensions that are, of course, interrelated, but different, and need to be dealt with in separate ways.

## CARE FOR DEPENDENTS

Care work is unevenly distributed in our societies. Some people spend more time and energy than others taking care of elderly or sick people, children and animals. Some of them choose to provide such care and have the resources to do so, while others have no choice and lack the resources. These situations have prompted extensive debate within feminist circles about a) whether such choices made in a patriarchal environment are truly autonomous, and b) what to do when they are not (whether one could 'forcibly' oust women from situations they had 'chosen' under a patriarchal system).

As stated in the introduction, this report does not take a stand on these issues, because they reflect ongoing discussions within the feminist movement and municipalist organisations. However, this does not mean ignoring them. If political practices and dynamics fail to consider the position of these people, they will systematically exclude them and ignore their voices. Being unable to address the root of these inequalities should not result in exacerbating the problem by ignoring their political impact in practice, not only because this would be unfair to the sidelined groups in particular, but also because it would undermine the democratic political process.

In addition, if we want to change the perception of care work, which is still mostly deemed to be a private matter, it is important to make the community accept it as a collective responsibility that can and must be shared. Otherwise, women will always remain overburdened with caring, either because of how duties are assigned at home or because other, more disadvantaged women will be (poorly) paid for providing care.

*When people are always there, writing articles and going to meetings, it's because someone else is cleaning their house. When someone sends a long e-mail it's because they aren't doing their laundry.*  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)



The vast majority of people active in our organisation have no family responsibilities. They are either retired or are young people with no children.  
(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

These challenges can be addressed in different ways, depending on the context. One way is by helping people with responsibilities for caring by easing their burden, so that they can dedicate more time to participating in political (and other) activities. This means supporting them if they want to do less care work.

A second thing we can do is make activism more compatible with care work, so that anyone wanting to do both can have a while at the same time continuing to care for their dependents. The aim here is not to force anyone to leave caring to others if they don't wish to do so, but to adapt to their choices and make it easier for them to be put into practice.

We do this on a case-by-case basis.  
But we need to create a group and structures to provide support.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

Finally, until care work is more evenly shared within society, it makes sense to ensure that men take on more of the workload. Encouraging such a shift would not only aim to ease the burden on those delivering care, but also to immerse men in care provision, which would help to change their views on care-related responsibilities and induce them to assign a higher value to care delivery.

## CARE FOR PEERS

Political activism is a collective undertaking and, as such, cannot merely focus on setting goals and achieving results. Collective activities are complex, and caring for each other is central to a feminist outlook. This is not just because care provision ought to be centrally integrated into any process, but also because it is usually women who do most invisible caring in communities and this effort needs to be given the value it deserves and shared out more evenly. No political project would be sustainable in the long run without the tremendous psychological support that is mostly provided by women.

In the language we use, especially in meetings, women assume a heavier workload when caring for others and mediating when problems arise.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

[When negotiating the composition of the mandato team] it was quite hard to care for each other every time conflicts occurred. We weren't caring enough when dealing with conflicts. There were clashes and feelings of a lack of understanding and injustice. Some people didn't feel welcome, etc.  
(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)

Taking care of peers does not mean being 'nice' and polite, making pretences or being obsequious. It means considering others' circumstances, being empathetic, asking about others' needs, talking things through, being patient, always believing the most favourable explanation for others' actions, etc.

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We're very flexible in terms of contributing. Everyone gives what they can, when they can. When someone can't do something they agreed to do, there's total understanding. (Ana Andzersen, We Brussels)

Finally, taking care of peers sometimes means saying difficult things, as a way of treating them as responsible agents, not as children. Tackling tough topics head on can be the best way to show each other respect. Conflict is intrinsic to any collective activity, too, and any feminist approach must a) recognise its existence; b) recognise its inherent value a trigger for political and social change; and c) pay attention to how it is processed so that it becomes a productive phenomenon, not a divisive one that causes unhappiness.

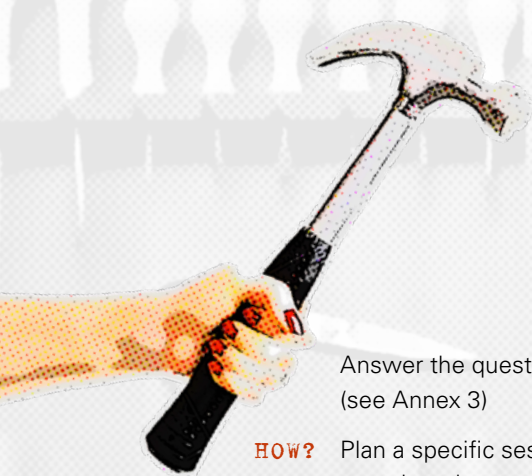
## SELF-CARE

A third dimension of care concerns how activists look after themselves. Feminism has argued that work needs to be compatible with life, not dominate or suppress it. The same may be said of the (paid or unpaid) work done by activists, since setting no boundaries on the drive towards efficiency and or on personal dedication to activism would reflect a capitalist world view.

Another reason to care for oneself is that it is the only way to make activism sustainable and effective. If people are tired, stressed, disappointed or have overly full agendas, their political actions are unlikely to be maximally inspired, creative and smart. Their minds will probably be focused more on damage limitation rather than on creating and implementing new ideas. Lack of self-care also prevents major projects from being well designed and effectively rolled out.

This state of affairs has proven problematic in most areas of activism, whether in the municipalist movement or not. In many countries, for most people being politically active is something they do in their free time. Thus, it replaces leisure and, although it can be enjoyable, almost always generates stress and, in extreme (but not rare) situations, even burnout. Hence, some people who can't endure the pressure end up abandoning political activism when faced with the choice of staying physically and/or mentally healthy or pursuing their political activist's agenda.

The organisational culture we've created is pretty terrible. People dedicate their lives to the organisation. Our people working for the city council have suffered a wide range of awful symptoms due to stress. This is a destructive model.  
(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)



## TOOLBOX

Answer the questionnaire «Is my organisation caring about care?» (see Annex 3)

**HOW?** Plan a specific session to ponder this collectively, have individuals complete the questionnaire and then share their responses, or maybe try a combination of both approaches.

### CARE FOR DEPENDENTS

(R)

Set up a children's play area at every public event

**HOW?** Set up a safe, suitably supervised area where kids can play and move about freely. Identify people within or outside your organisation who can make this happen. Check you don't end up making women responsible for this.

68 |

(R)

Create stable childcare spaces

**HOW?** For example, Barcelona in Comú has hired a person 20 hours a week to carry out a pilot project called *Canalla en Comú* (which roughly translates as 'kids in common'), whose aims go far beyond creating a play area at the organisation's headquarters. Its design takes on board children's interests and aims to ensure the project's continuity.

(S)(C)

Don't forget that care isn't just about children

**WHY?** The elderly, any dependents (including animals), and the people taking care of them, need attention and space for themselves according to their specific needs. So bear this in mind and create accessible spaces and caring activities, and make sure people know about them.

(S)(C)

Men as caregivers.  
Shatter any stereotypes!

**WHY?** Sharing responsibility goes beyond ensuring a work-life balance and entails challenging the stereotype that domestic tasks and caring are 'women's work'. It means being jointly responsible for looking after and raising a family and ensuring that people have the same rights and obligations, regardless of their gender.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

One interesting example of municipal platforms' awareness of this issue was how activists from Ahora Madrid and other organisations linked to running the city council reacted when the participation councillor who had become a father insinuated that he would continue to appear at public events linked to a major consultation on remodelling the Gran Vía, one of the city's main streets. Feminist activists organised different ways of pressuring the councillor to assume the burden of care incumbent on him and warned him of the social network exposure he would face if he failed to do so. Ninja-style feminism!

## CARE FOR PEERS

(s)

Set up specific groups or committees to deal with conflict and mediate when necessary

**HOW?** By setting up a care committee or group, ideally not primarily composed of women. But try having a minimum of 50% men and see what happens.

**DID YOU KNOW?** One interesting example is set by Barcelona in Comú, which has a specific body, dubbed the 'Guarantee Committee', which is in charge of dealing with internal conflicts. In addition, it has a 'care group' which is geared more to taking preventive measures and managing discomfort or conflicts that do not involve rights violations.

**BEWARE!** Mediation can be used as a dilatory tool. Clearly set out the procedure to follow for activating these mechanisms.

(s)

Hold specific sessions to flush out conflicts in your group

**HOW?** There are many ways of mapping conflicts and identifying potential or actual problems in organisations. They range from the traditional SWOT analysis to simple measures like kicking off assemblies and meetings by sharing feelings and emotions before diving into the agenda. Start by checking the conflict mapping tool developed by the Irish Traveller Movement<sup>16</sup> and guidance card designed by act4transformation<sup>17</sup>.

16 Creating a Conflict Map: <https://itmconflictmgmt.com/tools-practices/creating-a-conflict-map> (05.03.2020).

17 Act for Transformation: [http://act4transformation.net/fileadmin/templates/dokumente/downloads/handout-CA1-conflict\\_mapping-engl.pdf](http://act4transformation.net/fileadmin/templates/dokumente/downloads/handout-CA1-conflict_mapping-engl.pdf) (05.03.2020).

(PT)

Practise the 'art of hosting'

**HOW?** Check out the website [www.artofhosting.org](http://www.artofhosting.org).

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

We Brussels develops techniques to ensure that every voice is heard and that the whole human being is considered, not just the rational one and the actions taken. To do this, before every meeting they ascertain people's feelings and intuitions and use metaphors to convey the broader meaning of their work.

**BEWARE!**

Some people are used to traditional organisational methods or are simply shy. Bear this in mind when implementing tools that might take people out of their comfort zone.

(S) (C)

Hold ice-breaking sessions before every meeting or assembly

**WHY?**

Assemblies and meetings are spaces where people express and debate issues and take decisions. If those in attendance feel comfortable and 'secure' enough, they will participate as equals alongside everyone else This highlights the importance of deconstructing and questioning how people treat each other at such core political gatherings.

**HOW?**

There are all kinds of ways of breaking the ice and energising people, but sometimes, a simple «*Hi, how are you?*» will suffice.

**(S)(C)**

Set up crisis committees and support networks

**WHY?** Whenever one or more people face a crisis, simply asking how you can help is not enough. Often, we ask anyone needing to be cared for to tell us their requirements. Crisis or care groups need to be proactive, take in the situation and, if necessary, temporarily assume the tasks of people unable to carry them out. Creating a sense of support and showing people that they are being listened to is important for overcoming such crises, learning as a group how to manage them and avoiding them in the future. This applies equally to day-to-day and one-off problems.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

M129 sets up specific Telegram groups whose members do not include the person(s) needing help or support (who may even be unaware of their existence). Such groups are created whenever someone is involved in an accident, has a work-related problem, etc.

**(R)**

If possible, find and dedicate resources to tasks that can be carried out by employees of your organisation.

**WHY?** Because sometimes organisations place too great a burden on certain people. This could be avoided by hiring someone a few hours' work every week take care of concrete tasks.

**HOW?** Map the resources at your disposal. Draw on resources in the social economy and establish a collaborative network that involves your local community.



(PT)

Encourage people to work online.

**WHY?** The current obsession with 'physical presence' is not sustainable or compatible with people's lifestyles or personal rhythms. After all, some people can get work done at home or late at night, but are unable to attend many daytime meetings in person.

**HOW?** Check our list of Digital Tools for Democracy (see Annex 4), remembering that inclusiveness must also extend to the digital domain. Bridge the digital gap by providing training and tools for those who are unable to access the Internet under equal conditions (see above).

**BEWARE!** The excessive use of online tools can end up causing burnout by preventing people from separating their working and leisure time. So introduce rules that favour a 'sanity-friendly' use of technology.

(R)(T)(S)

Draw up a platform rule book to secure safe, inclusive spaces by devising clear, consensual rules (see the 'Non-violence' section below).

**DID YOU KNOW?** L'Asilo has a 'Care Board' that meets twice a month to discuss relationships and care-related conflicts and work on resolving them.

(S)

Organise informal activities to take care of the collective, e.g. dinner parties or social lunches.

**WHY?** Such informal gatherings strengthen personal ties and generate leeway for more comfortable, easy-going interactions within the group. Promoting such events separates political work from the rigours and harsh realities traditionally linked to it. Contrary to the traditional idea that it is prudent to separate political/militant and personal relations, experience has shown us that this notion does not stand up to scrutiny. We tend to engage in politics with our friends, partners or colleagues, but also with people we don't like or with whom we have clashed. For this reason, informal events where relationships can be developed and restored are crucial and play an integral role in fostering respect and fair treatment by and within an organisation.

**BEWARE!** Informal gatherings should not become places for decision-making or power-building. Traditionally, they have isolated people whose personal circumstances (work/life (im)balance, schedule, accessibility, etc.) prevent them from attending. So the challenge is to arrange informal events that are inclusive and don't make anyone feel left out. Also pay attention to when and where these events take place and to other practical details (e.g. can people bring along their children or dependents in their care?).

(PT)(C)

Use humour to dissipate any tensions.

**WHY?** Why not?

## SELF-CARE

(S)(PT)

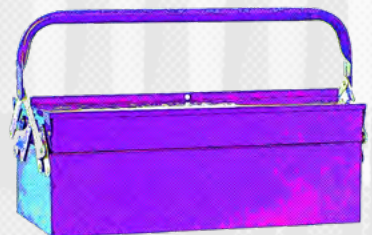
Make sure you are capable of spotting and acknowledging '*activist burnout*', both in you and in those around you.

**WHY?** Sometimes people take on more work than they can manage or simply feel their personal situation is becoming unbearable. At other times, political situations or crises within an organisation can seriously upset people. The patriarchal power system prevents people from talking about these situations, denouncing them, and showing up people's vulnerability. Yet taking account of people's distress is the best way of guaranteeing viable lives and sustainable political activism. So don't be afraid to express your feelings and help others when you detect that they are suffering.

**HOW?** Innovate ways of coping with '*activist burnout*' by detecting it, dealing with it as a community or simply urging the burnout victim to take a break<sup>18</sup>. Don't forget the value of crisis committees and support groups. See the self-check questionnaire «Am I experiencing activist burnout?» in Annex 2.

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18 Activist Burnout Is Real: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/05/dealing-with-activist-burnout> (05.03.2020).





V



Superficially, democracy and feminism have a highly variable relationship, depending on how they interact. Potentially, of course, they can shore up each other, because both aim to bring down the hierarchical decision-making system characteristic of the patriarchal system. However, simply opening decision-making and participation to anyone can also replicate informal differences in status and power. Sometimes organisations link democracy with open assemblies and voting, as if this is all there is to it. Yet as stated in earlier sections, the privileges of some people – e.g. educated, middle-class white cisgender men – determine not only how organisational structures are designed, but also how they are emulated in open, and seemingly horizontal, organisations. Key questions, among others, include not only who can access certain posts, but also who has more visibility, who manages to get their voice heard and whose opinions are taken more seriously. According to this line of reasoning, sometimes the feminist solution might be to close decision-making a little bit rather than leave processes completely open.

Having a place and a voice in an assembly is not enough. Our people need to have an opportunity to develop their political approaches, like those of others defending more traditional positions.  
(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

However, this is not necessarily a logical conclusion. It could also be argued that democratic decision-making doesn't simply mean opening proceedings to everyone and letting them talk and vote. Procedures are democratic when they guarantee equality between the members of a group or community in the course of decision-making that affect them (Christiano, 2018).

Feminism and democracy are entirely compatible. There's no democracy and participation without feminism. Actually, I believe feminism is broader: it's about power structures and working at power relations to make us all more equal.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

Municipalism has a more sophisticated understanding of democracy. As has been argued, it defends a participatory view, different from merely representative approaches, and aims to achieve equality in decision-making, but not just in votes, for among other things it also wants people to have equal standing and their voices to be given the same weight (Roth, 2019a). To bring this about, democracy and feminism are allies fighting against the patriarchal power structures.

Especially for organisations working in an electoral and/or institutional context, the political environment does not encourage democratic decision-making. In many instances, the agenda is externally determined, and political organisations need to take and implement decisions very quickly and strategically. They can't spend months deciding on issues that need to be dealt with immediately.

*When we say "look how quickly that decision was made!", the decision in question was usually a man's doing. In feminism, we lose when we know there's no time, because our project, by definition, tends towards care, and caring takes time. When there's no time, there's patriarchy. It's more effective.*  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

The challenge for municipalist organisations, therefore, is to find ways of making decisions swiftly, while at the same time being as democratic as possible. If they want to change the way politics has been traditionally done, they need to find a balance between efficiency and horizontality. Democracy takes time, yet political organisations also aim to have an impact on a context where windows of opportunity open and close quite fast. And since inaction equates to a positive decision (opting for the status quo), decision-making is an unavoidable responsibility. The question is how to make it maximally democratic.

Organisations need to be horizontal, but also efficient, and it's hard to make these different variables compatible with each other. The fact we're inside political institutions adds more externally imposed variables.  
(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

Feminist methodology involves reaching decisions in a non-authoritarian – but also resolute – way, because life is happening now. It's not merely about imagining what we want, but also working with what we have here and now.  
(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)

The key solution for dealing with the two issues mentioned so far (the risk of open decision-making to reproduce informal hierarchies and the need to be efficient and democratic at the same time) is structure, in the form of rules and practices that create an environment where all voices are heard and have equal weight when decisions are made. It is when democracy is unstructured and superficial that it helps to reproduce hierarchies and statuses. As Jo Freeman taught us decades ago: «for everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit» (Freeman, 1973). And it isn't democracy, but badly designed decision-making mechanisms that make organisations slow and inefficient.

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Most problems with internal democracy stem from the fact that we've never had formal structures. Informal structures mean informal power. We don't name these problems when we see them.  
(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

When there's a lack of structure, practices are patriarchalised. In informal settings, there is much more masculine solidarity, like men having a few beers together and deciding stuff.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)



In our organisation, formal and informal spaces overlap.

There are formal and informal Telegram groups and formal and informal meetings. In practice, it's hard to know where decisions are actually made.

We've tried to build clearly defined spaces: the general coordination committee, the executive direction, the campaign committee, etc., but in practice it's hard to make decisions in open debate.

(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

We need to pay attention to the fact that the push towards political institutions results in less internal democracy.

We need to have a movement outside and pay attention to society. This is the only way we can survive. We need to keep autonomous groups as critical referents that are essential for the mandato. It's hard, because there are often misunderstanding about how institutions work. We occupy the political arena to find out things we didn't know before. The key is in the method.

Good conceptual work without effective implementation is of no use.

(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)

Depending on the size of organisations and the complexity of decisions, setting up democratic decision-making mechanisms that are also efficient may turn out to be a great challenge. Fortunately, when clear procedures are established, organisations can learn and get used to following them and enable swift decision-making when necessary. For instance, Barcelona en Comú has used online voting to make key decisions, e.g. about pacts with other political parties, and this mechanism has been supplemented by decentralised deliberation in the various territorial and thematic groups. In practice, a decision as difficult as that one was reached in less than a week, with plenty of deliberation and participation. Although this kind of mechanism is not entirely risk-free (see the toolkit below), it shows that participatory decision-making does not necessarily need to be slow.

The conclusions reached so far do not mean that sometimes efficiency shouldn't simply be set aside. Long-term strategies, the design of decision-making structures, and decisions that are extremely complex might require lengthier consideration, the procurement, production or exchange of information and so on. Sometimes the risk of making a mistake that could have long-term effects outweighs efficiency. In addition, sometimes it might be better to let a window of opportunity close for the sake of the organisation's health, when the status quo does not look too bad.

Another important consideration is that not all kinds of structures can do the work, and it's important to pay attention to the characteristics of decision-making mechanisms, because not every possible design will promote equality in a specific context. As is often the case, the devil is in the details. There is a huge number of possibilities, the best design being the one that adapts to the context of a particular organisation. However, four elements have been found to be key in municipalist organisations: a) mechanisms that make it easier for new people to join; b) decentralisation; c) facilitation; and d) the combination of various online or offline tools.

One of our aims is to equalise the situation faced by new people. We invite everybody to take as much responsibility as possible.

(Ana Andzersen, We Brussels)

We have thematic working groups and neighbourhood groups. There's also the assembly (rede), which has participants from every group. Rede is a space that is always facilitated, and we've applied different methodologies there, ensuring plurality of voice and no monopoly of masculine voices or voices of people of a certain age, for example.

(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

It's important to nurture the trust between people who've been in the organisation for some time and also to include new people and trust them.

(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

The challenge of establishing democratic procedures is important to municipalist organisations, not only in principle, but also for strategic reasons. They openly promise to change how politics is done, which is why many people join them or vote for them in elections. So there are usually great expectations, and when they aren't met, disappointment runs high and the platforms may lose supporters.

Some people who felt interpellated by our principles and join our organisation, end up leaving when they see how we work.

Sometimes our internal dynamics resemble those of traditional political parties. It's dramatic when people leave, and such losses hurt.

We have the sensitivity and capacity we need, but sometimes we get in our own way. It's very frustrating.

(Claudia Delso, Marea Atlántica)

Finally, for decision-making to be democratic, it shouldn't just guarantee participation, but also ensure that decisions are actually made in the legitimate place. If open assemblies are places where people discuss issues, but the conclusions reached are not mandatory, then that is a mockery of democracy, not truly democratic decision-making.

Someone who didn't come to the assembly now says he doesn't agree with the decision. Men!

(Alejandra Calvo, M129)





# TOOLBOX

(PT)

Copy or adapt Marea Atlántica's decalogue for preventing macho behaviour at assemblies (see Annex 5)..

**HOW?** Print it out and hang it up in prominent places, like in the rooms where you hold your meetings.

**WHY?** Obviously because it constitutes a permanent reminder, but also because it takes some weight off feminists who usually carry the burden of raising such issues.

(PT)

Use digital tools to promote democracy (see Annex 6).

**HOW?** Review and experiment with different tools. Ask other organisations about their experiences with these tools before embarking on new ways of working and making decisions together. This may help you avoid some mistakes.

**BEWARE!** Experimenting with digital tools takes time, and people might feel overwhelmed. Be patient and take things slowly.

**(S)(C)**

Promote collective discussions to determine the political positions you will subsequently defend.

**WHY?** Collectively constructing arguments about political positions allows people who form part of the collective to agree on the reasoning underlying them. This creates a far more empowered collective and results in better rotation of spokespersons and/or more effectively coordinated communication.

**(S)**

Make decisions in formal spaces, e.g. at assemblies or meetings..

**WHY?** Informal settings (bars, private conversations, etc.) hinder the transfer of information and are an obstacle to distributed decision-making. In addition, the people normally excluded from informal decision-making and socialisation spaces are women and other people with care responsibilities, or those who have difficulties finding time for their political work because of their professional or personal situations.

**HOW?** Allocate time for deliberation and for voting. Let these two phases of action be clear and make sure any conclusions are documented.

**BEWARE!** Bear in mind that formal spaces can also overwhelm some people.

(S)

Hold small meetings  
as well.

**WHY?** Because this way you can include people who don't have as much experience of participating in assemblies or who may be socially anxious about facing a large group of people.

**HOW?** Before, during or after bigger meetings, convene smaller ones, where people pursue a clear agenda and can hold more open discussions. Take notes and share them with the larger group.

(S)(C)

In an assembly, make sure those  
who have not yet participated can  
have their say.

**WHY?** In deliberative spaces it is important to ensure that anyone wishing to contribute can do so in a welcoming environment. Likewise, those who usually speak up should not be allowed to monopolise the conversation. Prioritising people who have not yet contributed when they ask for the floor indicates that their contributions are important to the collective and favours empowerment, diversity and horizontality. Check out the time trackers mentioned in the Gender Balance Toolkit.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Barcelona en Comú distributes coloured cards to make sure there is a fixed number of contributions by women and men.

(R)

Implement facilitated online and offline meetings and decision-making methods.

**WHY?** As mentioned before, informality usually undermines democracy. Facilitators provide methodologies designed to ensure that sessions' objectives are achieved and guarantee that all participants can express their views, not just people with a certain profile.

**HOW?** Create a pool of facilitators for your meetings. Train people to become facilitators. Also appoint someone to moderate online channels of communication, such as WhatsApp or Telegram groups.

**BEWARE!** Online voting and other public consultation tools based on digital participation can turn seemingly 'democratic' procedures into plebiscitary or Caesarist forms of voting. How questions are worded (as in surveys and polls) can hide or hinder alternatives, nuances and discrepancies, thereby avoiding them and simplifying debates. From a gender perspective, this may pose problems and be used as an instrument to impose a view or produce a bias.

(S)

Decide the dates and agendas of assemblies together. Announce meetings, events, and the agenda at least a week in advance..

**HOW?** Keep track of your members' availability (times and dates). Rotate established times or dates (e.g. between mornings and evenings or weekends and working days) so that everyone can attend some gatherings, yet at the same time make them regular enough to allow people to plan their agendas. Don't make any individual responsible for chasing up people to set the agenda. Commit to attending and make sure you can provide advance warning of any absence.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

L'Asilo announces all assemblies on its website, and people can even participate in them online. They are open, so anyone can participate.

**Why?** Because this makes it easier for people to adapt and more likely for them to plan to attend.

(S)

Strictly stick to times and agendas.

**Why?** Because this creates certainty and security, especially for people who may find it harder to participate. Don't add last-minute items to agendas, because some people might not have attended the meeting in the belief that those issues would not be covered.

**HOW?** Start on time, stick to the agenda and finish on time.



(C)

Take minutes of every meeting and share them.

**Why?** Because this makes it more difficult to say that something has or hasn't been decided. Minutes also give anyone who was unable to attend an idea of what was discussed.

**BEWARE!** Women tend to be assigned to take minutes. Try rotating the task and remember: men can also write...and if they don't, they should learn!

(S)

When possible, allow people to participate online.

**HOW?** Make sure meetings are held in places with a good Internet connection.

(S)

Avoid spam. Clearly define the uses and objectives of different communication channels and meetings.

**Why?** Because people deserve to know exactly what will happen in any space in which they participate.

**HOW?** Draw up your own list of guidelines or best practices for different spaces and channels of communication.

(C)

Make sure you have a common agreed code of communication. Be clear about tasks and goals.

**HOW?** By writing these rules and sharing them, to make sure everyone uses the same references (especially re names, terms and projects) and to make it easy for newcomers or people unable to participate on a regular basis to follow up. Keep especially in mind if information can be provided to people with functional diversity or communication difficulties.

(C)

Run communication campaigns to normalise concepts.

**HOW?** Track and record previous information – in minutes and/or publications – and communication codes (e.g. a glossary) to facilitate communication.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Reclaim the City highlights the importance of making sure information is communicated in a popular education style, which isn't always easy. Check out their website<sup>19</sup> to learn from their direct, clear style of communication.

(S)

Set up local (neighbourhood) groups and thematic groups.

**Why?** Because not everyone is interested in everything. Having assemblies that everyone can attend is important, but decentralised work allows people to focus on what they want to do.

**HOW?** Allow people to divide themselves into groups autonomously. Make sure you also build coordinating spaces that allow for interactions between the different groups.

**BEWARE!** Autonomy can also create non-democratic dynamics, so monitor how these groups organise themselves and make decisions, without affecting their activities.

(PT)

Identify and suggest different ways of engaging people in clearly defined tasks.

**HOW?** For example, by anticipating how much time or resources need to be put in, e.g. saying «This action should take 1 hour/2 weeks, etc.» or «We plan to finish this project by [DATE/TIME]», because often the fear of being 'trapped' in an overwhelming commitment prevents people from actively participating.



(S)

Be welcoming!

**Why?** This sounds obvious, but isn't. Assign people to work as 'mentors' or a 'welcome committee'. You can save newcomers a lot of time and stress by giving them a reference person and providing information about your organisation from the very outset. Also, by giving them a warm welcome, you make it more likely they will stay.

**How?** Do what you can, according to your resources. Start with an open, friendly attitude towards any first-time arrivals. Introduce yourselves as often as necessary to help newcomers contextualise the situation. Sometimes just having a 10-minute talk and sending a 2-page document with a few basics is enough.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

M129 has a welcome committee in charge of introducing the organisation and meeting newcomers' needs.



(S)

Provide company or support in urban spaces

**Why?** For many people, the prospect of going alone to an event or activity can be daunting. Others may specifically need company or support.

**HOW?** Set up informal meeting points, especially for newcomers. Make sure someone meets up with and accompanies them.

(S)(PT)

Delegate, distribute and rotate, tasks as a tool for active, equal and inclusive participation.

**Why?** Given political cycles, with their ups and downs, some organisations find they lack the tools and resources to facilitate that process of empowerment and engagement. Try to give newcomers as much responsibility as they want to assume. This is an exercise of transparency and prevents personalist leaderships and roles.

**HOW?** Have a list of tasks ready and be prepared to assign them to new people as soon as they join.

**HOW?** e dialogue and bidirectional tools for communication.

**Why?** To maintain dialogue within the organisation, beyond face-to-face settings dedicated to deliberation, it's important to have tools for two-way communication. Sometimes digital communication tools, with good protocols governing their use, enable people with less time to take part in face-to-face events.

Use shared tools for information management, organise information more efficiently, coordinate work better and share tasks more fairly Also provide physical tools, such as boards or flip charts, on which weekly or monthly needs for scheduled activities are noted down. This creates collective protocols that can be improved based on practical experience.

(S)  
Create new  
(virtual and physical) spaces  
and forms of communication.

**Why?** Making sure that spaces work for you and experimenting with new communication models can help to overturn power-based approaches and circulate information or promote alternatives for overcoming gaps, such as the digital divide, ageism or in spatial distribution within a city. Communication is a powerful tool for enabling participation. Start with a collective media analysis, like the one proposed by Include Gender<sup>20</sup>.

(C)(PT)  
Fight against the so-called  
digital activism gap.

**How?** Offer training on social media and digital tools. Promote inclusive resources to build and disseminate discourse. Connect digital forms of participation to offline tools, such as meetings. Pair 'difficult' individuals with people who get on with them.

**Why?** Digital tools play a strong empowerment role and represent different forms of participation and role-playing. How can you interact with members who don't feel comfortable with digital tools?

(C)

Develop tools to assess who is actively participating and who isn't.

**Why?** Often, part of a project, initiative or simple action is not assessed because there is no time and/or the logistics and work dynamics hinder such reflection. However, a gender impact assessment of participative structures is key, not just for feminisation, but also for boosting democratic practices in general.

**HOW?** Ask yourself any of the following questions. Does the proposal/project/action affect one or more target groups? Will it affect the daily lives of one or more groups in the population? If the answer to either question is 'yes', a gender impact assessment should be carried out. Are there differences between women and men in terms of rights, resources, participation, gender-related values and norms in this area?

(PT)

Once again, use humour to engage new people.

96

**Why?** Simple, everyday language, with a healthy dose of humour, is a key element. Humour is both a useful way of overcoming tensions and a great way of generating tension about an issue. Entire communication strategies can be built around humour.

**HOW?** Use a variety of media, from stickers and outdoor posters to online videos and web pages.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

A good example is Ne davimo Beograd's use of a giant rubber duck to raise awareness about the Belgrade Waterfront project. Another interesting example is the 2007 campaign against the housing crisis in Spain<sup>21</sup>.

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21 World Record for the Number of People Shouting "No Vas a Tener Casa En La Puta Vida": <https://beautifultrouble.org/case/world-record-number-people-shouting> (05.03.2020).



(PT)

Experiment with theatre and scenic representation.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

In Muitas, acting is considered a discipline closely related to feminism, since it allows different language and codes to be used to express needs and struggles. In that sense, the so-called Theatre of the Oppressed<sup>22</sup> provides tools for people to explore collective struggles, analyse their history and present circumstances and then experiment in using theatre to invent a new future together.

(S)

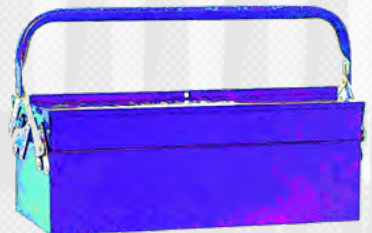
Bring along your family!

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Ne davimo Beograd invites families to come along to meetings, so that people can take part and be with their family at the same time.

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22 Theater of the Oppressed: <https://beautifultrouble.org/theory/theater-of-the-oppressed> (05.03.2020).





# VI



Feminism is not about giving women the same status as men, as the first waves of feminism would have claimed. Maybe that was the case in the past, but it no longer applies in the 21st century. The risk of that understanding of feminism is that it forces women to adapt to masculine behaviour without changing patriarchal structures, and that is not the objective! But in addition, it's also worth remembering that some women are privileged in various ways, while others suffer from different disadvantages. At the same time, some women find it easier to adapt to a patriarchal mindset and 'succeed' within such an environment, whereas others try and fail. Often this is because privileges don't only affect gender, but are unequally distributed according to many other criteria, such as race, education, age, sexuality, language, physical and mental ability, class, country of origin, and so on. These different inequalities are mutually reinforcing, with the result that some people are oppressed on several fronts. This is why intersectionality is a better approach for confronting structural inequality in society.

We may talk about feminism, but should actually be talking about feminisms, which comes in various strains. The feminism of white, educated, middle-class women is based on life experiences that are often similar to those of, say, disabled immigrant women, but on other occasions diametrically opposed. So this report highlights the limits of feminist thinking and practices that are not based on an intersectional analysis of forms of discrimination and oppression. In the introduction we warned about the choices and limits of our approach. Below, we shine a light on these issues.

How municipalist organisations use an intersectional approach differs quite markedly. Some feel that although some progress has been made regarding the situation faced by women, other dimensions of oppression are not receiving the same degree of attention, with only few measures taken to deal with them.

We work with a lot of minority groups and include their issues in our political agenda. But internally we don't do that much. Our electoral lists feature greater diversity (gender identity, disability, etc.), but that hasn't been reflected in our decision-making.

We have been exemplary in including people from LGBT groups, but not others.

(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

We aren't a diverse organisation. We have class, education and nationality biases. The fact that some of us are lesbians or gays doesn't qualify us as a diverse collective. This is something we need to pay attention to. (Alejandra Calvo, M129)

Some associations for immigrants ask to use our space, but don't manage to fully participate. Even when they come along to an assembly, the relationship is superficial. Ours isn't the type of politicisation and space that serves foreign people.

(Angela, L'Asilo)

In other cases, the racial dimension is included alongside gender and sexual orientation.

Our four elected representatives are two black women, a lesbian and an old woman. All of them are feminists.

We adopt an intersectional perspective: we understand feminism as a way of facing up to racism, income inequality and LGBTI discrimination.

(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)



One of the key questions organisations face regarding these issues is reminiscent of the one asking how to deal with gender issues. On the one hand, the ideal approach would entail addressing them from a cross-cutting perspective, i.e. including considerations of race, disability or class in every dimension of political action and in every area or group within an organisation. The challenge they face is that in practice such issues always get pushed to the bottom of the list of priorities. In practice, what has happened in some organisations is that specific groups have been set up, e.g. LGBT groups or nationality-based groups for immigrants. Naturally, these groups serve to forge bonds and provide support, but they also run the risk of segregating their members, entirely contrary to their intended purpose. So once again, the question here is how to change the ways politics is done to adapt to everyone's wishes, needs and capabilities. And there is no straightforward answer. Of course, addressing the various issues raised in other sections of this report would be a major step forward. But immigrant women and disabled women, for example, don't share the same wants and needs.

There's a basic consensus that the movement needs to be inclusive. Non-participation should be a decision based on people's agenda, never on socio-economic issues or backgrounds. There's a lot of work to do to dismantle racism, homophobia, etc. Sometimes training can provide an answer, other times conversations and interactions. (Mandisa Shandu, Reclaim the City).

Another important observation is that municipalist organisations have proven to have a greater capacity to integrate diverse communities by taking concrete action than by opening spaces for deliberation and decision-making. This probably leads to two kinds of conclusions. Firstly, it reminds us that most people want to be part of municipalism and feel useful. So we aren't just talking about a few being interested in this kind of political activity. It follows that organisations need to find more different ways of bringing people together, not merely focus on assembly-style participation.

Secondly, municipalist organisations have spaces for deliberation and decision-making that aren't accessible to people who don't fit into certain models of citizenship, due to distance resulting from language, the topics covered, times, places and even style-related aspects, along with many other factors too, no doubt. It follows that these environments need to be reformed if assemblies and groups are to become more diverse, which may well run the risk of making privileged members of these organisations feel uncomfortable and sometimes force them to step back.

We make sure information is communicated in a popular education style, though this isn't always easy.  
(Mandisa Shandu, Reclaim the City)

Our mobilisation actions (a choir, door-to-door campaign, etc.) were pretty diverse in terms of involving people of different races, disabled people, etc. much more than in our organisation's structured bodies and spaces. We don't know if this had to do with time-related flexibility or other factors. But we certainly know it wasn't due to the lack of personal commitment with other tasks, because this happened during the campaign and the moment was pretty intense.  
(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú).

The utopian ideal is an organisation that works like a clock, with different parts running at different speeds, all making the clock work and diversity present throughout. The model of representation, instead of being vertical, should be more based on interlocking. We need to force this to become practice and invent new rules. It's like polyamory: hard work, but you gain a lot in terms of freedom.  
(Alejandra Calvo, M129)

# TOOLBOX

(S)(PT)

Consider the situation  
in your organisation

**HOW?** Discuss, discuss, discuss! Which groups are represented in your organisation? How is it structured socially? Which people are mentioned and profiled, say in social media? Which groups occupy 'higher' or 'lower' posts in the organisation? How different is members' access to resources? What are its dress codes and seating arrangements? Are there any 'unspoken rules'? Which groups represent the norm and which are oppressed? Take a look at the incredibly useful activities designed to overturn the hetero norm in an amazing guide called Break the Norm!, produced by Living History Forum and RFSL Ungdom in Sweden<sup>23</sup>. Break the heteronorm!

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Barcelona en Comú assessed its diversity situation, having previously assessed its gender situation in 2017. These assessments cover a wide range of issues, including the sustainability of people's lifestyles, time and availability to participate.

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<sup>23</sup> Break the norm: [www.includegender.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BreakThe-Norm.pdf](http://www.includegender.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BreakThe-Norm.pdf) (05.03.2020).





(R)

Don't decide what's good for someone else!!

**Why?** Because you will probably be mistaken.

**How?** If you want to include diverse people in your organisation, ask them what they would like to do, how and when.

(S)

Diversify your channels for participation.

**Why?** Because there's no one-size-fits-all mechanism for such involvement. Make sure that decision-making procedures are accessible and attractive to all.

**How?** Try different channels of communication, meeting times, sizes of gathering, meeting places, etc.

(S)

Set up a diversity group.

**HOW?** Incentivise privileged people to join it, too, to make certain it doesn't segregate people. Make sure the group works on a strategy to implement intersectionality as a cross-cutting strategy in your organisation.

**BEWARE!** Diversity can turn into an 'umbrella' concept encompassing a broad spectrum of issues. This can dilute the treatment of those issues and prevent the group from evolving or working towards specific goals, messages or targets.

(R)

Use binary categories to approach a problem and define main lines of attack.

**Why?** Reality is complex, so embracing an intersectional approach (that helps to define social conditioning factors) and categorising people (to reveal degrees of privilege or oppression) facilitates the identification of specific aspects to work on with a view to altering existing dynamics. Proposing to simplify issues by forcing them into binary categories, even though we know this doesn't reflect reality, helps to add layers of complexity that an intersectional analysis takes on board.

**HOW?** One way of defining the character of an organisation or project is to ask binary questions like: If this was a person, what *kind* of person would it be? A woman, a man or non-binary? Where would this person live: in the town or countryside? This approach makes it easier to define a common viewpoints for the collective and pave the way to a deeper conversation about how the values and way in which the organisation relates to its environment help to determine its power relations with other agents active in the same context.

(PT)(C)

Keep track of relevant local rumours.  
Work on them by developing training courses, organising workshops and promoting networks with the agents involved in rumour-busting policies in the locality.

**Why?** Understanding how rumours, stereotypes and prejudices work in our municipalities is a useful tool for rising to the challenges associated with managing how people live together in a culturally diverse city.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Barcelona implemented this guide for anti-rumour agents in the city<sup>24</sup>.

(R)

Deconstruct privileges

**HOW?** By developing tools to identify invisible systems conferring dominance and power. Several resources for workshops can be easily adapted to any group or situation. Check out this one from Peggy McIntosh to understand the roots of white privilege<sup>25</sup>.

24 A practical guide for anti-rumour agents: [https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnaccio-intercultural/sites/default/files/documentos/guia\\_antirumors\\_barcelona\\_2016\\_eng.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnaccio-intercultural/sites/default/files/documentos/guia_antirumors_barcelona_2016_eng.pdf) (05.03.2020).

25 White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: [www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf](http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf) (05.03.2020).

(C)

Identify hate speech with a view to preventing it.

**HOW?** It is essential to strive to understand how hate speech emerges at the local level, how it spreads, which codes it uses, how it mutates and how it passes down through institutions or from grassroots level up to their leaders. Invite groups and associations rooted inside and outside your community to work on diversity from different vantage points. Provide them with a comfortable space to meet up in and exchange ideas. Devise common strategies and assist them.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The rise of hate speech, specially online, is currently high on the public agenda. In fact, between 2013 and 2017, the European Council ran a No Hate Speech campaign to combat the phenomenon and promote human rights online<sup>26</sup>. Actions like the Panzagar campaign in Myanmar<sup>27</sup> created codes for preventing and rejecting hate speech on social networks to stop anti-Muslim discourse online.

**BEWARE!**

The current debate about pitting hate speech against freedom of speech can be complex, so it's important to frame it by analysing the discourse spread within your organisation and its impact.

(S)

Create spaces to meet with other collectives and dynamise your understanding of their situation, thoughts and struggles.

26 Actions such like the Panzagar [campaign](https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/publications-on-hate-speech):<https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/publications-on-hate-speech> (05.03.2020).

27 Flower Speech Campaign: <https://beautifulrising.org/tool/flower-speech-campaign> (05.03.2020).

(C)

Don't assume a leading role when supporting people from other collectives.

**Why?** Inviting or being invited by someone doesn't necessarily entail an unequal relationship. No dominant or submissive attitudes should be tolerated based on privileges established by class, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity or orientation. If you don't feel comfortable with how someone is treating you, communicate this in an assertive, but constructive way. If you feel anyone is patronising you or exercising some privilege, explain this to the person(s) concerned.

(C)

Never take people's identity and context for granted.

**HOW?** Don't ask about someone's origins, sexual orientation, sexual identity (misgendering), social class or socio-economic situation. Instead, learn about them by listening and respect their self-identification by using their preferred names and pronouns.

(S)

Build networks of support  
for legal activism.

**Why?** Legal activism to support diversity isn't just a vehicle for preserving individual rights, but also for collectively re-politicising law and re-legalising human rights, highlighting conflicts and discrimination and contesting policies in court and in the public domain.

**HOW?** Contact legal activists and hold workshops to contextualise laws and the resources available for legal activism. Do this from a critical perspective, because sometimes talking about the legal framework for equality and human rights can engage values to do with power, conformity or security. Making legal procedures accessible and comprehensible is an important tool for empowerment and action taken.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

During 15M protests staged in Madrid in 2011, a team of activists set up the Sol 15M Legal Committee which provided legal support for all the participants (see <https://legal15m.wordpress.com/>). Activists used to write their lawyer's phone number on their arms to make sure they could call them if arrested. Even though the 15M movement was later decentralised to neighbourhoods and village assemblies in Madrid, the committee is continuing to pursue its core issues, forming thematic groups to develop a broad, binding 'alternative law' geared towards ensuring the maximum expression of citizenship rights. Campaigns against Evictions (PAH), legal actions against police brutality in the alien internment camps (the CIEs No campaign), the Oficina Precaria, which provided professional advice to workers and students, and the Refugees Welcome movement throughout Europe are just some other good examples of how important is to deconstruct and decodify justice to make it accessible and understandable.

(PT)

Give others the floor for training, talks and other diversity-based activities. Don't restrict them to your organisation if they are not your specialism.

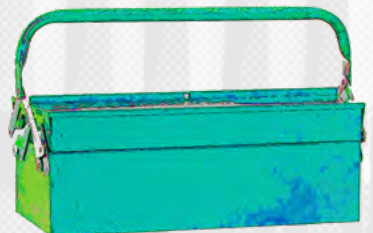
**Why?** If you want to learn, contact organisations that are active in those domains and can provide insights and relate their experiences, instead of mediating or appropriating their discourse.

(R)

Knock on your neighbours' doors!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Laia, from Barcelona en Comú, points out that door-to-door campaigns reach people who won't come knocking on your organisation's door. Even with a broad social base, organisations like Barcelona en Comú recognise their members' various privileges and devise strategies designed to reach their community and broaden their social base.



# NON- VIOLENCE

NON-VIOLENCE



# VII



The feminist approach to violence has effectively broadened interpretations of what constitutes examples of it and the framework for combating it, whilst deepening the political strategies for preventing, acting against and remedying the consequences of violence and recognising its victims. What's more, the establishment of anti-violence movements and the questioning of existing forms of conflict resolution and management of interpersonal relations are all key issues in feminising politics. Feminism hasn't just spotlighted violence against women, but through its intersectional approach has devised tools for understanding the interactions between different forms of violence and oppression and the need to address them in unison.

However, establishing spaces that are devoid of patriarchal violence and building a collective awareness about the phenomenon requires constant, arduous efforts within organisations, which are not violence-free environments. Understanding patriarchal violence in all its complexity and questioning the power relations that produce it generates transformative personal and collective processes, triggers deep self-criticism and confronts privileges head on.



neither dead  
nor imprisoned

If combating violence against women is deemed an essential part of the feminisation of politics, the top priority must be to address concrete actions taken against it, to gain an understanding of how it can be incorporated into intersectional strategies for building political organisations that are free of all forms of violence.

The facts and figures about all manifestations of violence against women show it is an issue that must not be put off or treated with disdain either inside or outside organisations. It is a truly central issue in the feminist struggle, but also in society at large. Feminism saves lives: «Feminist efforts to end male violence against women must be expanded into a movement to end all forms of violence. Broadly based, such a movement could potentially radicalize consciousness and intensify awareness of the need to end male domination of women (...).» (Hooks, 1984).

However, addressing violence within organisations – especially violence against women – has not been easy. There is serious scope for change at the local and municipal levels and for actions targeting *macho* violence. But before municipalist organisations can address this issue, they must first gain a clear awareness of the phenomenon and develop measures to prevent it occurring within them.

It was very interesting to analyse this topic from the personal and collective levels. At the collective level there were plenty of warnings and there was greater awareness, etc. But as soon as people leave the context of the assembly, sexist dynamics reappear at the personal level in the form of sexist comments and so on.  
(Angela, L'Asilo)

On various occasions, when facing situations of sexist violence, there is not only a lack of tools and consensus on how to act, organically and/or collectively, but also of a kind of tacit understanding within social movements that, for a long time, it was thought that the people working for them or participating in their activities did not mistreat anyone or were not guilty of violence. The complexity of interpersonal relationships also generates very intricate situations that hinder strategies for denouncing violence in organisations, especially within the context of intimate relationships.

We experienced violence internally, against one of our supporters, an activist. It was a huge scandal. Since our judicial system doesn't deliver justice, we opted for public shaming, building a narrative against it. However, most of our practices were quite reactive, not strategic. We need to prevent further attacks and deal with them in other ways. We need to build protocols.

(Natalija Simovic, Ne davimo Beograd)

So frameworks of interpretation and action need to be broader, but one of the greatest challenges entails generating comprehensive, not just punitive approaches.

We live in a patriarchal, punitivist society. If our aim is to govern and change institutions, it is also we who need to shift paradigms. Rather than falling into a strategy of public shaming or escrache, we should work on prevention, not necessarily by bombarding social networks, but by resorting to other means.

(Caren Tepp, Ciudad Futura)

The socialisation models on which we base ourselves are not fixed or watertight, because people can influence and work to change them. In this sense, political organisations and social movements, as places of not just political, but also social and cultural transformation, constitute useful tools for the resocialisation and deconstruction of some of these acquired values.

A diverse group of different people works together intensively for long periods of time, and the well-being of its members is of paramount importance to the organisation. Making sure there is no violence in the relationships built up between them is essential. The 'how' aspect matters.

At Barcelona en Comú we've been slow to pick up on this. We have done things, but this was one of the last issues we addressed. Not because it's necessarily complex, but because it's quite hard to talk about the issue. We have difficulties dealing with conflicts in general.

When they become concrete and complicated, they lead to difficult situations and violence.

(Laia Rosich, Barcelona en Comú)

A non-mixed mandato would be simpler. But we choose to politicise conflict so we can educate our emotions and learn lessons from competition and violence with a view to making practices more democratic, transparent and open. It's very difficult, but that's the aim. Having a mandato together with men makes it harder, but democracy is the coexistence of all differences, and conflicts need to be processed

in a non-violent way.

(Áurea Carolina, Muitas)



To end with the culture of rape

# TOOLBOX

(S)

Build safe organisations to prevent and combat violence against women.

**Why?** Don't postpone this, for the present (not the future) is female. Preventing violence against women and placing such measures at the centre of an organisation's life paves the way for a cross-cutting approach that will affect it in its entirety.

(C)

Call patriarchal violence what it is. And don't confuse it with domestic violence.

**Why?** Language isn't innocent. Violence against women (VAW) has often been blurred, ignored or hidden behind different interpretive frameworks, which often assume what caused or prompted the phenomenon. Defining the problem like this involves representing it in a very different way, and extremely diverse measures can be taken to combat the problem. Bustelo, Lopez and Platero devised a classification of the different interpretive frameworks in identifying the origin of VAW, ranging from *domestic violence* as a *genderless concept*, which focuses on the space where it occurs (domestic) to its more universal interpretation as a product of gender inequality in all societies, invoking concepts such as patriarchal violence, macho or male violence and gender-based violence. We are witnessing a renegotiation of the meanings of violence, and it is essential to be clear about which of concepts and meanings represent our values and which aspects we want to highlight when speaking about violence.



(PT)

Understand the phenomenon.

**Why?** Thinking in stereotypes can be very counter-productive when addressing violence, which is often hidden, subtle, or even 'naturalised' its perpetrators.

**How?** Training is essential. Find experts, surviving victims, facts and figures to put paid to myths and rumours. A starting point for understanding the many forms of VAW is the guide drawn up by Women's March<sup>28</sup>.

(S)

Don't stand still.  
Act!

**Why?** How violence, especially patriarchal violence within organisations, is managed is often invisible, because the acts are supposedly committed between equals, or people who are supposedly aware of its problems.

**How?** Creating channels and truly effective mechanisms to generate violence-free spaces is an exacting task, requiring pedagogical guidance, preventive measures and clear, shared values that identify any manifestations of violent behaviour.

(PT)

Focus on prevention by drafting an agreed-upon protocol, rulebook or code of conduct that clearly identifies what violence is and which attitudes are deemed violent.

**HOW?** If such an instrument is to be effective, it must be drawn up on a participatory basis and be open to debate and expansion. The process of developing it is itself a learning tool! However, whichever form the instrument takes, it must set out some main premises, including values that are encouraged and others that are condemned, and provide clear examples of each. It must also define key terms such as sexist violence, hate violence, racism, transphobic violence, aporophobia, ableism, and so on. The resulting instrument must be shared, as a collective commitment, and even be read (out), signed or announced by the participants in activities, assemblies or working groups. It must also clearly define the measures and procedures that will apply if violence is perpetrated. For two available models, see Annex 6.

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**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Ciudad Futura has an amazing example of a protocol for preventing sexist violence, focused on prevention, not on punitive sanctions. It was designed to distinguish and scale different expressions of violence and identify which call for behavioural modification and which are simply intolerable.



(S)

Do your best to avoid inaction and prevent victims of violence from feeling helpless.

**Why?** All too often, when a conflict related to patriarchal violence arises, personal affinities, ignorance and a sexist conception of interpersonal relations can end up revictimising the victims of violence. A sense of helplessness and lack of answers can also be the result of an organisation failing to call perpetrators into account.

**HOW?** Set up an early intervention committee that highlights the seriousness of the situation and guarantees the safety of victims of violence. This committee is not a jury, but a group of people from the collective committed to the actions required to ensure safety and coexistence. The committee should deal with any situations from a gender and diversity perspective. Preferably, anyone involved in assessing the situation and listening to both parties should have no direct affinities with the people involved. Should the situation transcend the committee's capacity for action, appropriate experts may be called in to offer advice. There are many ways of acting in such cases: each organisation must assess which actions it prefers and how to implement them.

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(S)

Set up a  
'guarantee committee'.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Barcelona en Comú's Guarantee Committee, the entity to approach after a rights violation, issues binding reports on cases of violence. There is also a mediation team ready to act whenever a conflict arises in a group. These conflicts may not entail any violations of rights or rules, but need to be acknowledged by those involved. So here, mediation also serves as a tool for learning and debate.

(S)

Focus on restoration. Guarantee victims safe spaces. Respect their time and privacy. This doesn't mean imposing silence, but rather managing information relating to them and any incident in a responsible way.

**HOW?** Depending on the seriousness of the situation, if there is consensus you can work constructively on what happened, e.g. by providing training on sexist language, organising non-mixed workshops on masculinities, or launching awareness-raising campaigns against various forms of violence.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Traditionally, persons occupying positions of power are protected from any violence they perpetrate, which is why it's important to activate agreed protocols. It's no excuse to decry the denunciation of violence as a political manoeuvre. Ciudad Futura is aware of the risk of political adversaries misusing such arguments, and when faced with violence perpetrated by an elected representative, rejected it as an excuse. Instead, it responded by efficiently communicating what had happened, without giving details, thereby avoiding the alarmist, sensationalist, harmful way of communicating these situations.

(PT)

Call a spade a spade!

**Why?** Ableism, ageism and fatphobia are all phenomena that feminists have highlighted, linking them to the power structures that produce them. Examples of these prejudices shouldn't be dismissed as 'jokes' or personal struggles, because on the contrary they interact to seriously damage targeted individuals. Women of colour and femme women in particular tend to be fetishised, obscuring the dynamics of racism, fatphobia, ability and hetero-patriarchy behind 'personal preferences'.

(S)

Understand the importance of acting at the local and/or municipal level.

**Why?** Women's right to a life free of gender-based violence cannot be fully attained unless it is asserted internationally, domestically and locally. Try to understand how violence is shaped in your community. Provide supportive local networks, set up discussion groups and leave your door open for any victims of violence.

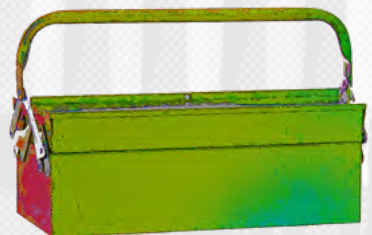
**BEWARE!** The availability of social support and the roles played by our closest community, activists and support groups is essential for building violence-free lives and improving the lives of surviving victims. However, some issues require a professional approach, needing to be tackled from, say, a medical or legal perspective. Reporting an incident to the police is not the only action that needs to be taken when violence is perpetrated (for it only ends up excluding those who opt not to go down the legal route). Moreover, for various reasons taking the institutional route can leave people on the receiving end of violence feeling vulnerable or re-victimised. That said, in some situations and contexts goodwill is not enough either. So assess and responsibly consider the role of the organisation and its members when working with victims of violence.

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(PT)

Not all forms of violence are obvious.

**HOW?** Take environmental harassment, for example, where the chief characteristic of its perpetrators is that they insist on behaving in a way that, deliberately or not, creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive atmosphere or environment.



# CONCLUSIONS

# VIII



## Feminising politics is no easy task.

We all live in patriarchal societies where, amongst other problems, ways of doing things are highly competitive, demanding, hierarchical and determined by privilege. For municipalist organisations in electoral and institutional contexts, the situation isn't any better: they face many challenges and have very few resources, including very little time, to address them.

Nevertheless, this report shows two key areas in which they have managed to make progress. Firstly, they have succeeded in placing feminist issues on the agenda, despite the difficulties and disincentives associated with that specific environment. Secondly, they are, albeit slowly, starting to feminise politics.

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As the interviews show, individual municipalist organisations face rather different situations. Some of them, like We Brussels, have dedicated more time to establishing feminist ways of working, but have made less impact and achieved fairly modest results. Others, like Barcelona en Comú, have managed to achieve more in terms of institutional and organisational development and have more resources. Nevertheless, they have experienced far greater tensions, both internally and externally.

Despite these differences, this report shows how municipalism is well suited to pursuing the feminist aim of changing how politics is done. Even if many of the changes discussed and suggested in the toolkits have not yet been implemented, most of them do not require extensive effort and can be easily tried out, provided the political will is there. It would be far more difficult to exercise feminist leadership or collective power in organisations like national political parties.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of municipalist projects is that they are better placed than other kinds of social movements to change how politics is done inside existing political institutions that make decisions about the lives of people. Social movements face several limitations in this regard, which is why activists in so many places have decided to step up and stand for election.

That said, the municipal experiments featured in this report have all faced ups and downs, and have only been pursuing this approach for a few years. How well they succeed in actually changing how politics is done in the years to come, working from the bottom up, yet at the same time playing a critical role in institutional contexts, remains to be seen.



the revolution  
will be feminist  
or will not be

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# ANNEXES

## 1 MUNICIPALIST ORGANISATIONS

The municipalist organisations discussed in the interviews in this study are described below.

### **BARCELONA EN COMÚ – INTERVIEWEE LAIA ROSICH, COORDINATOR OF THE FEMINISM WORKING GROUP**

Barcelona en Comú is a municipalist platform that was launched in Barcelona in June 2014 by the members of various social movements. It includes activists, people with no previous political experience and members of some small political parties. Barcelona en Comú's manifesto was drawn up via citizen participation, and its priority policies include radicalising democracy, stopping evictions, fighting touristification, remunicipalising the city's water company, and reducing economic inequalities between neighbourhoods.

After winning the May 2015 municipal elections, the organisation formed a minority government led by mayor and former housing rights activist Ada Colau. In 2019, the citizens' platform won a second term to govern Barcelona alongside the Socialist Party.

The platform has set a leading example of how to combine social activism with institutional action, and how to challenge the artificial boundaries separating these two domains.

[barcelonaencomu.cat](http://barcelonaencomu.cat)

[twitter.com/BComuGlobal](https://twitter.com/BComuGlobal) and [twitter.com/bcnencomu](https://twitter.com/bcnencomu)

[facebook.com/bcnencomu](https://facebook.com/bcnencomu)

### **CIUDAD FUTURA – INTERVIEWEE CAREN TEPP, CITY COUNCILLOR**

Ciudad Futura is an autonomous party born in 2013 from the merger of two social movements (Giros and the 26J Movement) which have been spent more than 10 years fighting property speculation and urban violence, striving to transform an unfair reality characterised by inequality. In 2015, Ciudad Futura won three seats on the municipal council of Rosario in Argentina, making it the third largest party in the city. Convinced that its strategy necessitated working both inside and outside the municipality's public institutions, today Ciudad Futura's hundreds of activists run a network of self-managed projects across Rosario aimed at providing economic, cultural and educational alternatives from outside city hall. In 2019, Ciudad Futura renewed its seats in the council, expanded its social work to other cities in the province of Santa Fe and won seat in the provincial government.

[www.facebook.com/CiudadFuturaOK](https://www.facebook.com/CiudadFuturaOK)

[twitter.com/ciudadfuturaok](https://twitter.com/ciudadfuturaok)

[www.ciudadfutura.com.ar](http://www.ciudadfutura.com.ar)

### **L'ASILO-MASSA CRITICA – INTERVIEWEE ANGELA MARÍA OSORIO MÉNDEZ, ACTIVIST**

In March 2012, after a process of liberation, Ex Asilo Filangieri, the seat of the Forum of Cultures, became an open space dedicated to producing art and culture for the public's enjoyment. The space and its activities are autonomously run by a heterogeneous, flexible, open community based on solidarity, via open, horizontal assemblies and working groups that encourage interaction, experimentation and shared and participative management, rooted in the principles of community, promotion, interaction, exchange and experimentation.

Some of its 'inhabitants' became key players in the municipalist platform Massa Critica, a basic, inclusive, open space for discussing and deciding on the city's future in public assemblies, thereby pressing institutions to open up to responsible, participatory decision-making processes, particularly on common goods, public property, housing, tourism and public debt.

[www.exasilofilangieri.it](http://www.exasilofilangieri.it)

[twitter.com/lasilo](https://twitter.com/lasilo)

[www.facebook.com/lasilo](https://www.facebook.com/lasilo)

### **MADRID129 – INTERVIEWEE ALEJANDRA CALVO, ACTIVIST**

Madrid129 (M129) is a group of activists in love with the citizens' platform set up in 2015 to take part in the municipal elections in the city of Madrid, and which managed to seize control of the city council from the political right. M129 is a citizen-led organisation intent on bringing about more profound change in the city. Its activists stem from a range of social movements associated with autonomously run spaces in social centres.

In 2015, Ahora Madrid (AM), a citizens' platform, won the municipal elections with a minority, but backed by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), enabling it to govern the city council after 25 years of being run by conservatives. In 2019, a conservative coalition government won the election, so the right is back governing the city.

<http://madrid129.net>

[twitter.com/Madrid129](https://twitter.com/Madrid129)

[www.facebook.com/Madr129](https://www.facebook.com/Madr129)

### **MAREA ATLÁNTICA – INTERVIEWEE CLAUDIA DELSO, CITY COUNCILLOR**

Marea Atlántica is a political platform characterised as a leftist citizens' and political movement that applies collective intelligence to bring together social movements, citizens and political parties. Marea Atlántica was set up to build a platform to stand in the municipal elections held in May 2015. The platform won the elections, gaining minority control, but was backed by the Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG) and PSOE. Marea Atlántica ran the city council until 2019, and is now in the opposition in the municipal government.

<https://mareatlantica.org>

[twitter.com/mareatlantica](https://twitter.com/mareatlantica)

[www.facebook.com/mareAtlantica](https://www.facebook.com/mareAtlantica)

## **MUITAS – INTERVIEWEE ÁUREA CAROLINA, MP AND FORMER CITY COUNCILLOR**

Muitas (meaning “Many Women” in English) was founded in Belo Horizonte, capital of Minas Gerais state in Brazil, in 2015. The bold aim of the collective was to win the local elections together with citizens, social movements, collectives, parties and independent activists. Its key principles are a feminist, anti-racist politics of love, forming a broad union of progressive, diverse, representative forces, transparency, the deconstruction of privileges, acting for the common good and radicalising democracy.

Together with the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), Muitas stood in the 2016 in which Áurea Carolina emerged as the councillor with the most votes ever gained in the city’s history. In 2018, Áurea Carolina was elected a federal deputy. Together with the three city councillors, they form Gabinetona, an unprecedented experiment of citizens’ occupation of institutional politics in Brazil. This is a collective mandate that includes dozens of people interacting with civil society to decide on strategies and actions.

[www.facebook.com/asmuitas](http://www.facebook.com/asmuitas)

[twitter.com/asMuitas](https://twitter.com/asMuitas)

<https://gabinetona.org>

### **NE DAVIMO BEOGRAD – INTERVIEWEE NATALIJA SIMOVIC, ACTIVIST**

Ne davimo Beograd is a citizens' initiative that brings together organisations and individuals interested in urban and cultural policies, sustainable urban development, the fair use of common resources and citizens' involvement in the development of their environment. It is a group of people with various profiles, interests and beliefs, united by a common goal: to stop the degradation and looting of Belgrade in the name of urban and architectural megalomaniac projects, first and foremost the Belgrade Waterfront project.

Since its foundation in 2014, it has staged many protests, organised actions of civil disobedience, endured backlashes and threats against its activists, and used informative institutional mechanisms and non-institutional pressure to defend the public interest and reclaim the people's rights to the city. In 2018, Ne davimo Beograd decided to try and bring about change from within, and stood in the municipal elections, but did not win any seats in the city's parliament. However, it has continued fighting for a city that belongs to all its inhabitants.

<https://nedavimobeograd.rs>

[twitter.com/nedavimobgd](https://twitter.com/nedavimobgd)

[www.facebook.com/nedavimobeograd](https://www.facebook.com/nedavimobeograd)

### **RECLAIM THE CITY – INTERVIEWEE MANDISA SHANDU, ACTIVIST**

Reclaim the City is a movement of tenants and workers campaigning to stop people from being squeezed out of prime locations and to secure access to decent, affordable housing. The platform believes it is time to take the struggle for housing to the centre of the city, to the heart of power, to the people who ought to be living there in this land that matters. Land should be for people, not profit!

<http://reclaimthecity.org.za>

[www.facebook.com/ReclaimCT](https://www.facebook.com/ReclaimCT)

[twitter.com/reclaimct](https://twitter.com/reclaimct)

### **WE BRUSSELS – INTERVIEWEE: ANA ANDZERSEN, ACTIVIST**

We Brussels is a collective of concerned citizens, inspired by the emergence of radical democracy in cities like Barcelona and others around the world. It is campaigning for the inhabitants of Brussels to come together and reinvent the city's politics. It promotes municipalism and, in 2018, organised a conference called Fearless Cities.

The platform wants to promote citizens' debates, come up with ideas for the city and its neighbourhoods together, and stood for election in 2018 and 2019. The collective wants to build a new platform to promote participative political decision-making and vote it into the system, then change it from the inside, using citizens' votes to try out alternatives, ideas and solutions for a new future.

[www.webrussels.org](http://www.webrussels.org)

[www.facebook.com/webrussels](https://www.facebook.com/webrussels)

### **ZAGREB JE NAŠ! – INTERVIEWEE: IVA IVSIC, CITY COUNCILLOR**

Zagreb je NAŠ! is a political platform for local elections that seeks to put politics back into the hands of citizens, i.e. activists, scientists, teachers, cultural workers, trade unionists, retirees, neighbourhood initiatives and social entrepreneurs, citizens seeking real change who have taken matters into their own hands. The goal of the platform is to change what 'dealing with politics' really means. For them, politics is based on the principles of participation, inclusion and openness. They believe that the basis for a new politics is the idea that citizens are entitled to address the problems that determine their daily life and participate in decisions made about the city's resources, from the neighbourhood level right up to the municipal assembly in city hall.

In 2017, Zagreb je NAŠ! started working in a political context after 15 years spent exploring many different channels of communication with the municipal authority. The platform is a cultural institution, a civic public partnership. In the latest municipal elections, it won four seats alongside other political parties.

[www.zagrebjenas.hr](http://www.zagrebjenas.hr)

[twitter.com/ZagrebJeNas](https://twitter.com/ZagrebJeNas)

[www.facebook.com/ZagrebJeNAS](https://www.facebook.com/ZagrebJeNAS)

## 2 SELF-CHECK QUESTIONNAIRE: AM I SUFFERING FROM ACTIVIST'S BURNOUT?

Adapted from <https://youngfeministfund.org/2018/05/careispolitical>

BEWARE! This is not a precise, quantitative tool. Obviously, most 'yes' answers indicate potentially harmful behaviour. However, the questions in this questionnaire are not only for individual reflection, but also for collective consideration. So share them with colleagues or people you trust, work on them individually or collectively, and try to come up with sustainable solutions. The Spanish feminist author Amaia Pérez Orozco argues that, contrary to the saying 'no pain, no gain', she maintains that we live our lives based on the principle of 'no joy, no gain'.

- > Do you check your phone as soon as you get up?
- > Is your phone (especially Telegram/Whatsapp groups or e-mail lists) the last thing you check before going to sleep?
- > Do you avoid eating while working for your political organisation?
- > Do you struggle to balance your work/personal/political life?
- > Have you ever cancelled personal appointments or family plans to meet a commitment related to your organisation? How did you feel about that?
- > Do you sleep 8 hours a night? How often do you sleep more or less than that?
- > Do you put off going to the doctor because you don't have enough time?
- > Do you dedicate time to at least one activity or hobby away from work to wind down?
- > Do you consider your political work to be your main hobby?
- > Can you freely express your tiredness or exhaustion within your organisation without fear of being negatively judged?
- > Do you have friends outside your political organisation?



### 3 CARE QUESTIONNAIRE: DOES MY ORGANISATION CARE ABOUT CARE?

Adapted from <https://youngfeministfund.org/2018/05/careispolitical>

- > Is there a safe space within your organisation where you can process the feelings arising from the work you do. Can you count on support to deal with secondary trauma?
- > Does your organisation have an ongoing policy of care?
- > Does your organisation guarantee workers' rights, working hours and fair pay when someone does paid work for your organisation?
- > Does your organisation review power relationships and take necessary steps to change them if need be?
- > Does your organisation have a protocol in place for dealing with harassment and violence against women in the event of attacks in the digital domain, trolling, emergencies, harassment or intimidation?
- > Does your organisation apply environmentally friendly measures or rules (e.g. re carbon emissions from travel, the use of paper, etc.)?
- > Can you freely express your tiredness or exhaustion within your organisation without fear of being negatively judged?
- > Do you feel that anyone in your organisation who is subjected to violence or harassment will be able to feel safe reporting it?

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### 4 DIGITAL TOOLS FOR DEMOCRACY AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION

This list was drawn up in the Medialab Prado with the working group Co-Incidimos

<https://minim-municipalism.org/db/digital-tools-for-democracy>

For more information about Co-Incidimos, visit the website

<https://www.medialab-prado.es/proyectos/40058/documentacion>

## 5 MAREA ATLÁNTICA'S DECALOGUE OF BEST PRACTICES FOR MEETINGS AND ASSEMBLIES

### DECALOGUE – ASSEMBLIES WITHOUT MACHO BEHAVIOURS

This decalogue is based on observations from our assemblies, their procedures and our behaviour in them. Assemblies are spaces where everyone should participate, exchanging views. You may have all the answers, but if you don't allow others to reply, you might end up monopolising the debate. Facilitators are there for a reason. They make sure we don't always take over a debate in which we're particularly interested. They mediate, so that other voices and perspectives can be heard before any decision is taken. They help us see beyond our own point of view. This is their function, and we must listen to and respect them.

1. When arriving at an assembly, try not to sit in the most prominent area.
2. Even if you're on the lookout for people similar to you, try to sit with others who are not as close, preferably women.
3. When contributions are invited, wait. Don't be the first one to talk. It's no bad thing to leave a few minutes for people less adept at expressing their ideas to think.
4. When you take part in a debate, ask yourself whether what you are planning to say has already been stated and needs to be repeated to add something new. If so, express your support for what the person who expressed the key idea said and just add your extra input, without repeating the rest.
5. Never try translating, clarifying or interpreting what another person said, especially fellow women. If something wasn't clear to you, ask her to explain it again or voice any specific doubts you may have.
6. When you want to reiterate something in a debate, try leaving time between the contributions making the same point.
7. Try to always monitor how many women and how many men take part in debates.
8. Do your best to see how long your fellow women and men speak for and adjust your own contribution to the average duration.
9. Be mindful of your non-verbal communication, your gestures, physical position and how you sit.
10. Moderate your tone of voice. Your opinion will not gain more weight by shouting or expressing it more forcefully.

## 6 MODEL CODES OF CONDUCT FOR BUILDING SAFE SPACES

This is a model code of conduct for building safe spaces in organisations. Its main focus is on prevention and learning, but it's a good place to start and you can adapt it to your organisation's circumstances and context. It was developed by Irene Zugasti and Alejandra Baciero. <https://minim-municipalism.org/db/model-code-of-conduct>

Ciudad Futura's protocol against patriarchal violence (only available in Spanish) is an exceptional example of how to focus on non-punitive approaches when combating violence. The work they have done on this issue is truly impressive. See <https://minim-municipalism.org/protocolo-de-actuacion-ante-practicas-y-situaciones-de-violencia-machista>

## 7 SELF-ASSESSMENT ON THE FEMINISATION OF POLITICS

1. What do you think feminisation of politics means? What does it mean for your organisation?
2. Which specific challenges do you face in terms of implementing feminist practices in your organisation?
3. What, if anything, have you done so far to address the issue of feminising your organisation?
4. How would you define the progress made by your movement in:
  - a) Introducing the feminisation of politics to its membership?
  - b) Integrating feminising principles into its internal structure, organisation and activities?
  - c) Integrating feminising principles into the policies proposed by the movement?
5. Elaborate how your movement's policies and practices correlate with the feminisation of politics.
6. How would you describe feminisation efforts vis-à-vis
  - a) individual members and b) the movement as a whole?Are there tensions between these two levels? If so, what are they? If not, why do you think this is the case?
7. How would you describe the impact of your movement's efforts to feminise politics?

## NOTES / IDEAS

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## **ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG**

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is an internationally operating, left-wing non-profit organisation providing civic education. It is affiliated with Germany's 'Die Linke' (Left Party). Active since 1990, the foundation has been committed to the analysis of social and political processes and developments worldwide. The Stiftung works in the context of the growing multiple crises facing our current political and economic system. In cooperation with other progressive organisations around the globe, the Stiftung focuses on democratic and social participation, the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and alternative economic and social development. The Stiftung's international activities aim to provide civic education by means of academic analyses, public programmes, and projects conducted together with partner institutions. The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung works towards a more just world and a system based on international solidarity.



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