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Social learning for critical global citizenship.
An ethnographic research of selected social movements
in Poland

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Summary in English

The thesis entitled “Social learning for critical global citizenship. An ethnographic study of three selected social movements in Poland” is the result of a qualitative study in the field of adult learning from a critical perspective in the method of critical ethnography.

The aim of the research project is to identify and explore the learning and participation of activists in social movements through engaged observation and critical reflection from an adult education perspective. Three social movements were analysed in the study: Extinction Rebellion Poland, Nyeleni Poland - Movement for Food Sovereignty, and Action Democracy. They were selected on the author's established criteria based on the theoretical framework of new social movements (Paleczny, 2010; Vanden et al., 2017) and network society (Castells, 2004, 2010b, 2010a, 2015).

The work focuses on the alternative creation of conscious and critical communities or groups working for change that, in addition to political goals, also build their internal culture based on democratic approaches and collective social development through action, reflection, communication, and negotiation, which is referred to as social learning (Wildemeersch, 1999; Wildemeersch et al., 1998) and learning activism (Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010). For this project, I set myself the task of supporting progressive social movements in their action, reflection, and organisational culture, and empowering their voice by bringing it into academic spaces through a citizen-researcher attitude.

The research problem was defined through four questions, the main one being: What and how do activists learn to change the global world in social movements? and three deepening questions. The collected empirical material consists of: 15 narrative interviews, photos and videos of participatory observation of events and meetings, social media communications and documents (such as positions, mission statements, principles, declarations), and the researcher's diary notes. All material was coded in the Atlas.ti 8 software, which supports qualitative data analysis.

As a result of the analysis of the material, I distinguished four categories described as 1) the holistic educational approach; 2) value-based orientation and critique of the status quo; 3) strategies and tactics for action; 4) the global perspective (themes and

dimensions of action). As a result of this analysis, I conclude that activism is a radical form of lifelong learning in the 21st century that centres adult learning around human rights, democracy, and civic participation and resists the neoliberal takeover of the concept of lifelong learning by educational policies focused on efficiency, measurability, and professional development. Another important conclusion is the identification of two dimensions of social learning and activist learning connecting individual engagement based on high social capital and activist privilege and community creation of an alternative learning context through regenerative culture, democratic participation in structures, and mitigating power relations or multilateralism. Finally, a third important conclusion is the transformation of the division between local and global engagement towards continuity and coherence between both perspectives at both the individual and collective levels.

Critical and civic engagement with global issues and radical tactics of action in public spaces allows us to formulate the conclusion that activists in social movements are learning how to become critical global citizens. As part of their activism, they design alternative learning contexts and organisational cultures that can contribute to massive social change in the future.

Keywords: social learning, activism, social movements, global citizenship, critical ethnography, adult learning

Summary in Polish

Praca pod tytułem „Społeczne uczenie się na rzecz krytycznego globalnego obywatelstwa. Badania etnograficzne trzech wybranych ruchów społecznych w Polsce” jest wynikiem jakościowego badania z obszaru uczenia się dorosłych z perspektywy krytycznej, a obraną metodą badawczą jest krytycznej etnografii.

Celem projektu jest identyfikacja, zbadanie uczenia się i uczestnictwa aktywistek i aktywistów w ruchach społecznych poprzez zaangażowaną obserwację oraz krytyczna refleksja z perspektywy edukacji dorosłych. W badaniu analizie poddane zostały trzy ruchy społeczne: Extinction Rebellion Polska, Nyeleni Polska – Ruch na rzecz suwerenności żywnościowej oraz Akcja Demokracja. Wybrane zostały na podstawie ustalonych autorskich kryteriów na podstawie teoretycznych założeń nowych ruchów społecznych (Paleczny, 2010; Vanden et al., 2017) oraz społeczeństwa sieciowego (Castells, 2004, 2010b, 2010a, 2015).

Praca skupia się na alternatywnym tworzeniu świadomych i krytycznych społeczności lub grup działających na rzecz zmiany, które oprócz celów politycznych budują również swoją wewnętrzną kulturę opartą na podejściu demokratycznym i wspólnotowym rozwoju społecznym poprzez działanie, refleksję, komunikację i negocjacje, co określane jest jako społeczne uczenie się (Wildemeersch, 1999; Wildemeersch i in., 1998) i uczenie się aktywizmu (Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010). W ramach tego projektu postawiałam sobie za zadanie, aby wspierać progresywne ruchy społeczne w ich działaniach, refleksji i kulturze organizacyjnej oraz wzmacniać ich głos wnosząc go do przestrzeni akademickich prezentując postawę obywatelki-badaczki.

Problem badawczy został zdefiniowany poprzez cztery pytania, z których główne brzmi: czego i jak aktywistki i aktywiści uczą się, żeby zmieniać globalny świat w ruchach społecznych? oraz trzech pytaniach pogłębiających. Na zebrany materiał empiryczny składa się: 15 wywiadów narracyjnych, zdjęcia i filmy z obserwacji uczestniczącej wydarzeń i spotkań, komunikacja w mediach społecznościowych i dokumenty (jak stanowiska, misja, zasady, deklaracje) oraz notatki z dziennika badaczki. Wszystkie materiały zostały zakodowane w programie Atlas.ti 8, który wspiera jakościową analizę danych.

W efekcie analizy materiału wyróżniłam cztery kategorie opisane jako 1) holistyczne podejście edukacyjne; 2) orientacja na wartości i krytyka *status quo*; 3) strategie i taktyki działania; 4) globalna perspektywa (tematyka i wymiar działania). W rezultacie tej analizy stwierdzam, że aktywizm jest radykalną formą całościowego uczenia się w XXI wieku, która koncentruje uczenie się dorosłych wokół praw człowieka, demokracji i partycypacji obywatelskiej oraz przeciwstawia się neoliberalnemu przejściu pojęcia „lifelong learning” przez polityki edukacyjne nastawione na efektywność, mierzalność i rozwój profesjonalny. Kolejnym wnioskiem jest zidentyfikowanie dwóch wymiarów społecznego uczenia się i uczenia się aktywizmu rozpiętych pomiędzy indywidualnym zaangażowaniem opartym na wysokim kapitale społecznym i przywileju aktywistek i aktywistów a wspólnotowym tworzeniem alternatywnego kontekstu uczenia się poprzez kulturę regeneracji, demokratyczną partycypację w strukturach, mitygację relacji władzy czy wieloliderstwo. Wreszcie trzecim wnioskiem jest przekształcenie podziału na lokalne i globalne zaangażowanie w ciągłość i spójność pomiędzy obydwojema perspektywami zarówno na poziomie indywidualnym, jak i kolektywnym.

Krytyczne i obywatelskie zaangażowanie w globalną tematykę oraz radykalne taktyki działania w przestrzeni publicznej pozwalają sformułować konkluzję, że aktywistki i aktywiści w ruchach społecznych uczą się jak zostać krytycznymi globalnymi obywatelkami i obywatelami. W ramach swojej działalności projektują alternatywne konteksty uczenia się i kultury organizacyjne, które mogą stanowić przyczynek do masowej zmiany społecznej w przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczne uczenie się, aktywizm, ruchy społeczne, globalne obywatelstwo, krytyczna etnografia, uczenie się dorosłych

Introduction

The history of social movements in Poland is rich and complex, especially after 1989 with the strong and visible heritage of *Solidarność* (Solidarity Polish Trade Union), which had an historical impact and changed Polish reality, overcame the Communist era, and created space for civil society in a free and neoliberal Poland. Many researchers have described the historical aspect of civil society in Poland (Ekiert et al., 2017; Gliński, 1996). The myths of civil society in the Central Eastern Europe Region were deeply analysed and deconstructed by Ekiert and Kubik (Ekiert & Kubik, 2014), where they challenge the weakness of civil society in post-communist countries and show their diversity and comprehensive organisational structures (Ekiert & Kubik, 2014, p. 55), while also discussing the relationship with decision makers.

However, it is worth remembering that social involvement in opposition to the system is an important national legacy of Polish society after the Second World War. After 1956, there were many parallel processes of social self-organisation, such as around the Catholic Church and the scouting movement. Growing social self-organisation was a response to the repeated crises of the totalitarian state and political oppression by the strengthening democratic opposition. The development of civil society in the 1970s and 1980s is still an important reference point that has permanently influenced the understanding of civic action in following generations (Gawin, 2015).

In the 21st century, organisations and movements are emerging from the contexts of global climate crisis, human rights, and minority groups, global social justice (Ekiert et al., 2017; Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Schaeffer, 2014; Vanden et al., 2017). The strategic and cultural shift in resistance to the anti-democratic actions of successive governments has meant that social engagement and protest has evolved into different forms and styles, and has become an intergenerational experience.

In their post-election publication in autumn 2015, Korolczuk and Jacobsson (Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017) point to the need to revise thinking about civil society in Poland, which, contrary to previous opinions, is neither unorganised nor dormant,

nor is it at the service of institutions and grant-makers. Korolczuk and Jacobsson write this at a time when successive demonstrations are sweeping through the country, testifying to what they call “an outbreak of political activism” (Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017, p. viii). The most visible form of this political activism being the KOD - Komitet Obrony Demokracji (eng. *The Committee for the Defense of Democracy*), which on 7 May 2016 gathered as many as 215,000 people in the streets in a demonstration in support of the European Union and the rule of law (JK, 2016). In the following months, tensions escalated around the government’s anti-choice proposal for a law on women's reproductive rights, culminating in Black Monday on 3 October 2016 (Chmielewska et al., 2017), when women dressed in black took to the streets in mourning for the loss of their fundamental rights in 120 towns and cities across Poland. Since 2015, examples of further protests have multiplied, such as protests in support of refugees and migrants (2015), protests in defence of the rights of LGBTQ+ minorities (2020), youth demonstrations on the climate disaster (2021), and anti-war demonstrations in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022). It is remarkable that during the course of this research project, further mass protests on reproductive rights were also held in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic (October 2020).

In the 21st century, activism and civil society organisations in Poland have been analysed by numerous sociologists (Chimiak, 2022; Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017; Mandes, 2007; Vergara Polanska & Chimiak, 2016), including its historical and modern aspects. Activism as a phenomenon has also emerged in research from an adult learning perspective (Bilon, 2019; Bilon-Piórko, 2022; Gontarska et al., 2022; Kosińska, 2020; Szczygieł, 2019), although it is recognised as a relatively new concept in relation to others such as social or civic engagement (Skrzypczak, 2016). Following the development of social movements in the last decade and their active participation in public and political life, this area of research still has great potential in terms of the activist and civic engagement of people of all ages because of the subject matter of these activities (eg. radical, progressive, conservative), including engaged and critical pedagogy.

The learning processes that occur when people volunteer, socially or politically, are part of lifelong learning and reflection on the state of contemporary society (G. Foley, 1999; Ollis, 2011). It is important for educational research to map

these activities and describe this phenomenon. However, through engaged and participatory research projects, researchers have the opportunity to also support socially or politically engaged people and the values represented on the flags of these movements through their reflection and analysis.

“We make our own history. Social movements know this: it is why we struggle, sometimes against seemingly overwhelming odds, to make a different world. It is hard to recognise in the present, which is one reason activists often read movement history and the biographies of earlier generations of organisers: looking back, it is far clearer just how much movements have shaped the world we live in.” (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p. vi)

Recognising social movements as one of the actor which is mostly interested in all forms of critical, engaged and action researches due to their awareness of power relations, domination and tensions inside and outside community (Kemmis, 2010). Undertaking research activities that are constituted on finding meaning together, while demonstrating solidarity in the actions taken and showing concern for the group when enacting local changes gives a subjective sense of being part of a larger whole, a network of connections that ultimately gives hope for change on a larger, global scale. Overcoming the dichotomy between educational theorists and practitioners is the aim of research projects of this type, combining educational research and work (Carr & Kemmis, 2004)

The aim of this research project is to identify and explore activists’ learning and participation in social movements through active and engaged observation, and to critically reflect on this from an adult education perspective. Three social movements have been selected according to the criteria described in Chapter 1 and based on the theoretical approaches of new social movements (Paleczny, 2010; Vanden et al., 2017) and network society (Castells, 2004, 2010b, 2010a, 2015): (i) Extinction Rebellion Poland, (ii) Akcja Demokracja (eng. Action Democracy), and (iii) Nyeleni Poland – Food Sovereignty Movement. The research project focuses on the alternative creation of conscious and critical communities or groups working for change, which in addition to their political goals, also build their internal culture based on democratic approaches and collective social development through action, reflection, communication and negotiation, what is described as “social learning” (Wildemeersch et al., 1998;

Wildemeersch, 1999) and “learning activism” (Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010).

The research problem is defined by four research questions (Chapter 1.1.2) and concerns the experience of activist learning in social movements at both the individual and community levels. The broad context of learning in social movements consists of the social capital of activists, organisational culture, and the social and external global and local political situation. The goals of social movements are realised by specific individuals who work together for the social change they define.

This research project also has an ambition to make its contribution to social change by bringing together academic and activist perspectives on critical and progressive adult learning. I combine both elements of my identity as a researcher and an activist with more than two decades of social and political commitment to women's rights, global social justice, equality and diversity. The decision to return to academia and embark on this research project that became the basis for this dissertation dates back to 2013-2015 and the implementation of an international project by the Institute for Global Responsibility entitled “Teachers agents of change” resulting in the monograph “Global education. Polish contexts and inspirations” (Kuleta-Hulboj & Gontarska, 2015). During the cooperation with academics, joint conferences and seminars, the need to link academia with NGOs was repeatedly voiced due to a common concern for the education of future generations, a critical reflection on systemic education, but also a community of goals and values.

This thesis and my four years of activity in the Polish and European research community is an attempt to build the first span of this bridge between my theoretical and practical engagement. The reflection and answering of the research questions are also an important contribution to my activist practice and will undoubtedly be used for further social or activist activities. The four-year period of deepening reflection, while also using the skills and networks developed through my work in NGOs to support academic activism and even guide people from the academy to new areas in global education or education for sustainable development, has allowed me to pave the way for more activists who want to work with the academy and academics who would like to be activists (more in Chapter 1.2.2).

This research work consists of an introduction, four main chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction, I have presented the historical and social background of the project, its aim and the research area, situating it in the perspective of sociological and educational research, as well as the academic and personal motivation for carrying it out.

In the first chapter the research perspective has been presented, as well as the project and method. The study was developed from a critical perspective and, in line with this, research questions have been developed, one guiding and three deepening questions that focus on learning and social change. The method I have chosen is critical ethnography, which stems from the perspective I have undertaken and from assumptions related to my role as a researcher. I then outline the method of data collection and the criteria for selecting and characterising the social movements that were involved in the study. I also share the research dilemmas I encountered during the project, which are: the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, my position as a researcher identified as a citizen-researcher, as well as other relevant research and methodological perspectives that were perceived as opportunities in the process, but which research decisions ultimately were not taken into account in the work.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research project embedded in the field of adult learning, the perspective of new social movements and the idea of critical global citizenship. In the first section, I introduce the pedagogical theories that were important guiding points in the selection of the adult learning literature and which led me to choose the category of social learning. This is discussed in detail in the next section based on Danny Wildemeersch's definition (Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999, 2014). In the second section, I refer to the sociological recognition of new social movements and network society (Castells, 2004, 2010b, 2010a, 2015). I present the context of social movements and their structures in both local and global perspectives. In the third subsection, I refer to the category of global citizenship (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014; V. Andreotti, 2011; Davies et al., 2018; Mansouri et al., 2017; O'Byrne, 2003) and the global dimension of social movements and NGOs. The critical global perspective, critical pedagogy or radical new humanity within the organisation typologies discussed bring these approaches closer to activism. The chapter concludes with the theoretical category of learning activism (Choudry et al., 2012; Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010), which

combines an adult learning perspective, a global perspective and engagement with social movements and provides a conceptual bracket for the theoretical framework presented.

The third chapter of the thesis is based on the analysis of all the research material (including 15 narrative interviews, analysis of external and internal communication channels of each movement, and participant observation of the researcher during events and activities undertaken by each movement, described in detail in the chapter on methodology) compared to the theoretical framework adopted. The main piece of the chapter consists of four separate parts.

Part one focuses on the holistic educational approach in the selected social movements described through the aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes as key components of social learning (Biesta et al., 2014; Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999) and learning activism (Choudry et al., 2012; Choudry, 2015) in a context of complexity of adult learning in informal environments. Part two focuses on value-based and critical approaches to *status quo* in relation to critical social justice (Bailey, 2017) and new ways of questioning neoliberal patterns through the promotion of regenerative culture in activism (Besta et al., 2019; Pigni, 2016). Third part analyses the strategy and tactics of action both on the individual and collective level and the learning processes continuously organising the reality of social movements internally and externally (Biesta et al., 2014). The final part opens up the perspective of how social movements operate globally and their potential to collaborate and build organisational, but also interpersonal networks (Castells, 2010b, 2015; Troll & Krause, 2016).

The fourth chapter summarises the conclusions of the analysis of the empirical material grouped in three areas, as well as enters into a dialogue with the theoretical framework by connecting and proposing some solutions. In the first section, the main conclusion is the recognition of activism as a radical form of lifelong learning. Among the arguments supporting this conclusion, I summarise the four dimensions of social learning, as well as referring to the structure and organisation of selected social movements as politically engaged networks that challenge the status quo at a systemic level. In effect, I propose, following Biesta (Biesta, 2006), a subversive take on the notion of lifelong learning in its radical form for activism and social engagement. In the second part, individual and collective activist perspectives are juxtaposed. Through

the prism of a critical understanding of the system, and by extending the insight to issues of social capital and privilege, I demonstrate the emancipatory nature of movements that consciously use the category of citizenship to oppose and create alternatives. In the third section, in the context of the previously mentioned citizenship and organising social movements, I diagnose the complementarity of local and global perspectives. What also follows is an attempt to compare the findings of the three selected movements with the two proposed typologies (Curley, et al., 2018; Troll & Krause, 2016), as a result of which the progressiveness of their action and their critical and global character are highlighted.

Finally, in the conclusion, I directly address the research questions posed in the project and formulate answers that summarise the analytical work in chapters three and four. I also note new threads and questions that may broaden the present work or constitute a continuation of it in the future.

Chapter 1: Research perspective and project design

1.1 Research perspective and method

In this chapter I present the research perspective, as well as the project method and design. The study was developed from a critical perspective and, in line with this, research questions have been developed, one guiding and three deepening questions that focus on learning and social change. The method I have chosen is critical ethnography, which stems from the perspective I have undertaken and from assumptions related to my role as a researcher. Then I outline the method of data collection and the criteria for selecting and characterising the social movements that were involved in the study. I also share the research dilemmas I encountered during the project, which are: the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, my position as a researcher identified as a citizen-researcher, as well as other relevant research and methodological perspectives that were perceived as opportunities in the process, but which research decisions ultimately were not taken into account in the work.

1.1.1. Critical perspective

In the research project I adopted the perspective of critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2014), which emphasises that all thoughts and actions are shaped by social and historical power relations, and that facts do not function in isolation from values or ideologies. Relationships between signifier and signified are variable and depend on social relations shaped by the capitalist system of production and consumption, and certain social groups are privileged over others, an element of oppression in a society that easily reproduces privilege by recognising its existence as inevitable. Critical theorists also argue that mainstream research practices often become tools that reproduce a system of class, race, or gender (Kincheloe, 2011; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007).

According to Habermas (Habermas, 1984), critical educational research is an emerging approach, which explores the political and ideological context of social behaviours. Critical theory seeks to reveal the interests of individuals and groups in

social power relations. Specifically, that a group that has more power and freedom gains it at the expense of another that loses power and voice, and is often repressed or socially marginalised (Cohen et al., 2005). Critical theory has the intention of changing reality and society to be more democratic and equal, that's why in the basic research question the term "change a global world" has been used to reflect the potential related to this perspective. Critical theory is also crucial to the hidden agenda of research as such and its legitimacy, as most of the research is based on unequal social structures and the heritage of academia as a place and space for social elites at some distance from the rest of society (Ibidem).

Knowledge is no longer neutral but is politically and ideologically determined. Emancipatory cognitive interest is related to action and reflection in order to allow repressed and hidden meanings into consciousness (Carr & Kemmis, 2004; Habermas, 1984). According to Habermas, critical social science serves the emancipatory interest in freedom and rational autonomy. Through self-reflection, individuals will become aware of the conditions in which they operate that are frustrating and limiting them, and that knowledge will help them to eliminate them and achieve their well-defined goals (Ibidem).

Comparing positivist and interpretive paradigms, even if paradigms in qualitative research has been questioned (Guba & Lincoln, 2014), critical theory tends to question and transform reality to emancipate powerless groups and change the *status quo*. Challenging the *status quo* and power divisions is both related to the perspective of this research project, and also to the way activists understand their role in society towards critical and progressive goals. Critical theory is also connected with global power relations and its colonial and post-colonial dimension, where the difference between the control and liberation of local communities or disadvantaged groups is crucial to understanding the trajectory of social change (Newman & Clarke, 2016). Power is both socially and historically situated and connected to values and frames in local, national, and global levels (Shaw & Mayo, 2016).

This cognitive perspective is described as axiologically engaged by researchers (Szkudlarek & Śliwerski, 1993). It assumes the deterministic nature of social relations in which we understand the oppressed party on moral grounds. Social change as a category in this research is defined by the Marxist assumption of inequality and oppression of social relations. It aims at introducing reforms, in this case systemic

changes regarding the rule of law in Poland, counteracting the climate crisis, or the system of food production and distribution. The change is founded on values such as social justice, equality, freedom, and democracy, which are drawn from an ethical system. The goal in philosophical terms, then, is not to interpret and understand the world, but to enact this very change.

Critical theory applies the principles of Frankfurt's negative dialectic by focusing on critique and questioning. However, critical pedagogues like H.A. Giroux (Giroux & McLaren, 1994), P. McLaren, and J. Kincheloe (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007) also introduce into pedagogy the category of the language of critique and the pedagogy of resistance. Both concepts allow for the analysis of dominant ideologies and an active stance of resistance to them. Group resistance, manifested through the formation of civic movements and organizations, is the other, ever-present side of the repressive influences of the social system on the socialization processes of groups and individuals (Szkudlarek & Śliwerski, 1993). Nevertheless, this communal contestation creates civic movements and organizations as communities that create an alternative culture by promoting specific values and a vision of the world that ideologically opposes hegemony. In this view, the concept of resistance transcends the dichotomy of individual and society and emphasizes the politically engaged and activist role of the individual in the social environment.

One of the most important approaches in critical theoretical discussions is the role of capitalism as a system which reproduces inequalities and its critique (Shaw & Mayo, 2016). The economic, political, social, and cultural factors also emerge when referring to the global world and the negative consequences of globalisation (Mayo, 2005). Neoliberals and capitalists have had an influence on education and learning, especially adult learning, but also on educational qualitative research. The expansive logic of capital cumulation is mostly related to financial capital and unlimited economic growth, but also to ideological connections, intellectual rights, and social stability, including readiness for critique and a readiness to face criticism and its presence within one's own borders, and even to use this criticism for one's own ends and to profit from it, including financially (Finnegan et al., 2021). To some extent, neoliberal strategies that increase global inequalities also generate communal opposition and acts of solidarity against systemic oppression (Shaw & Mayo, 2016). In this research project, it is important to recognise the entanglement of social

movements with capitalist and neo-liberal mechanisms, as well as their appropriation and subversive use for purposes in line with the values of these groups.

A consequence of choosing a critical research perspective is the choice of a qualitative research method, which, on a smaller scale of inquiry, offers the possibility to describe the diversity and complexity of phenomena, as well as to use the engaged and supportive role of the researcher (Carr & Kemmis, 2004; Cohen et al., 2005; Kemmis, 2010; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2014). This choice also determines the research method, which is an emerging branch of critical theory - critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Carspecken & Walford, 2001; Cohen et al., 2005), with the aim to emancipate individuals and groups towards collective empowerment.

1.1.2. Research questions

According to the matrix of research planning, one of the most strategic decisions was to formulate research questions, the aim of the research having been described in the introduction. The basic research question is: What and how do activists learn to change a global world within social movements?

This research question is analysed using the three in-depth questions:

- 1) In which ways do activists create and support learning contexts in the social movements?
- 2) What does activist participation in social movements mean for their learning?
- 3) What do activists and their learning contribute to reaching the aims of social movements?

The basic question is related to the critical research perspective and its aim to change situations, relations, systems, or even the world. In this research, the global dimension of learning in social movements, organizing, and mobilizing was also emphasized.

Question 1 recognises the learning context of participation in social movements, but also the structures, culture, rules, and principles which create and support learning opportunities. Then, question 2 reflects on the individual dimension of participating and the learning of activists in social movements. Finally, question 3 explores the collective dimension of learning and actions which comprise, or are expected to occur

in the future, in order to achieve the goals of social change proclaimed by these movements.

1.1.3. Critical ethnography as a research method

This research project is based on critical ethnography as a research method that is part of the interdisciplinary field of critical cultural studies and critical theory (Carspecken, 1996; D. Foley & Valenzuela, 2014; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2014). The ambition of critical ethnography is to foster, through research, an egalitarian society while creating universalist theoretical knowledge as well as local practical experience. The rejection of the positivist model of knowledge, and thus also the concept of its production in the academy, was a truly political revolt, carrying in its assumptions alternative interpretative, hermeneutic and constructivist concepts.

According to critical ethnographers, in a society shaped by ethnic, class, and gender conflicts, there are no knowledge producers who are neutral or objective. In defining knowledge, there is also a strong influence of the postmodern concept of Haraway's "situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988), which embeds knowledge in the specific cultural, historical, linguistic, and value context of the person who knows, which is a manifestation of a kind of epistemological relativism.

Carspecken (Carspecken, 1996; Carspecken & Walford, 2001) suggested some key premises of critical ethnography and it is worth elaborating here some of them in relation to this research project (Cohen et al., 2005). Firstly, facts and values are inseparable, and thus knowledge production in social movements and among activists, but also within the related research are one and the same, as demonstrated while setting the criteria of choosing the social movements for this research while having knowledge about them coming from my citizen-researcher position and my understanding of progressive and radical movements in Poland. Secondly, language and communication are central to understanding the perspective of the selected groups in this research, but also to understanding the notion of human rights and global citizenship. This includes following the language of social movements and activists and using their terms through gender sensitivity and non-violent communication both in engaged observation, and as a language of this thesis. Thirdly, understanding that inequalities and oppression are inseparable elements of the capitalistic system in the relationship between production and consumption, so that there is a possibility that activism will be taken over by the

neoliberal system, but also that, in a subversive way, activists and engaged researchers may take over these neoliberal tactics to change the world to be more free, just, and equal. This is both the threat and the hope of this research project. Finally, recognising that academics are a much more privileged group within the system than activists, and have more power and authority, so walking into the situation as a citizen-researcher with an activist biography to enter into academic debate can overturn the power relation inside the system at the micro level.

According to Cohen, Manion & Morisson (Cohen et al., 2005), there are five identified steps in critical ethnography research, which I referred to in my research design.

Stage 1: Compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data

Once the criteria for the selection of movements had been established, their activities were observed from a distance to confirm their fulfilment of these criteria. The collection of data about the current and historical activities of the movements, included in the brief characterisations of the movements in this thesis, was an initial step that focused on the collecting of data and primarily taking part in events to introduce myself as a researcher, but still came before contacting activists or initiating in-depth interviews. At this level, the data were cross-checked with the movements' official communications on social media, founding documents, and websites.

Stage 2: Preliminary reconstructive analysis

At this stage, interviews and participation in the internal communication channels of selected social movements were included, as well as individual contact with activists. I also increased my involvement as a researcher by undertaking joint activities with selected movements or by spending time with them during multi-day meetings in order to become a person closer to the movement, but also to analyse the power relations within the group and the roles of individual activists. This was easier because of the trust built around my activist biography (more in Chapter 1.7.2. Citizen-researcher standpoint). The coding of empirical material also emerged at this level, but initially only according to *in vivo* codes rather than according to designated research categories, although the authors already suggest high-level coding here.

Stage 3: Dialogical data collection

The interlocutors verified the transcriptions of their interviews (7 out of 15 made minor changes to the final text), and as a result of the personal relationships established, the first results of the data analyses were discussed with them, and some were invited to participate in events where they spoke in the context of the research being conducted (Utopia and education IV – online conference, 23 September 2021, hosted by University of Wroclaw). At this stage, further participant and engaged observations were included in two of the three movements to verify consistency with the interviews in specific scopes (e.g., in the case of XR Poland on structure, communication, and conflict resolution).

At the third stage, group interviews were planned to involve activists in reflecting on the collected data, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible and the potential to conduct them online did not meet my purposes to bring additional value from a group perspective and confronting facts and opinions.

Stage 4: Discovering system relations

At this stage, the point of reference was the broader context of how activism functions in the social sciences (mainly adult learning and sociology) and the verification of the analysis and interpretation resulting from the research project with other researchers, including participation in seminars, conferences, or the production of texts for publication. At this stage, the theme of the privileging of activist groups and their individual social capital emerged (more on this in Chapter 4), but also the Polish, European, and global dimensions of activism in the context of other concepts of learning, such as lifelong learning.

Stage 5: Using system relations to explain findings

This stage involved aligning the research findings with learning and social theories. While the authors (Cohen et al., 2005) advocated for moving in four stages from the existing situation through diagnosis and change programming to assessing the achievement of the new situation, the change in the study was to follow the needs of the social movements involved in the study and engage the knowledge, tools, and authority of the research to support their struggle for change in specific areas. A kind of change achieved was the inclusion of the critical perspective of social movements in the academic debate.

The five stages listed above helped to design the study, but it is difficult to precisely delineate the timing of each stage. Some took place in parallel, but a certain flexibility, also due to the challenges described in the next section of the chapter, allowed this project to be carried out.

Researchers from the critical ethnography strand create their own notions of collaboration, situatedness, and authorship. The example of Foley and Valenzuela (D. Foley & Valenzuela, 2014) provides two research positions: the former engages in a critique of American culture and the struggle against positivism and scientism as a progressive academic; the latter is the role of an activist sociologist who identifies and collaborates on a psychological and political level with the groups that participate in the research. I have also drawn from this concept the notion of the citizen-scientist. In the version presented in this project, the citizen-researcher, although vulnerable to academic critique, is the benchmark for research studies grounded in practice.

1.1.4. Data collection

In the critical ethnographic research conducted for this thesis from November 2019 to April 2021, the main research techniques consisted of 15 narrative interviews with intentionally selected activists from three social movements in Poland (transcriptions of all interviews in Polish are included in Annex 2 to this thesis) and the participatory observation of: work in the structure of Extinction Rebellion Poland (XR Poland), teamwork and public actions of Akcja Demokracja, and the main event of Nyeleni Poland – Food Sovereignty Movement (later as Nyelni Poland) The Second Forum for Food Sovereignty, held in Warsaw, Poland, between 30th January and 2nd February 2020.

The data analysis included social media, photos, and film recordings, and researcher journal notes. A list of all materials that were coded in Atlas.ti 8 for this research is available in Annex 1 of this thesis. Additionally, the analysis of public information about all three movements was also developed to map channels of communication with the broader public.

Fifteen interviews were conducted with individuals from the three selected social movements, including seven men and eight women. The selection of people in

each movement was slightly different, which shows the variability and flexibility within the research project. In XR Poland, it started by attending the XR Warsaw (local chapter of XR Poland) introductory meeting and by contacting two people who had co-founded and established the movement's structures in Poland, in Wrocław and Warsaw respectively, and they recommended further people to contact. As a result of the interviews and the introductory meeting, I joined the XR communication channels (such as an online Mattermost forum) and was asked to support one of the circles (dealing with the self-organising structure). Activists were informed about the research I was conducting and at the same time were keen to benefit from my activist experience.

In the case of Nyelni PL, I first attended the Food Sovereignty Forum (having previously informed the organisers at registration that I would be collecting material for the study), where I identified the people most involved in the movement and the organisation of the event. Based on this identification, I requested activist interviews. The interviews also referred directly to the Forum, its ideas, and the situations observed there (also using photographs).

With Akcja Demokracja, on the other hand, the reconnaissance started by analysing the mailings I regularly received because of the signed petitions I had signed (which formally qualified me as an activist of the movement), recognising the team structure, and contacting individuals. During this time, it became apparent that the organisation was undergoing changes in personnel (one of its founders and former leaders was leaving) and structure. At the same time as contacting me about the research project, people from the Akcja Demokracja team offered to work with me (February 2020). As a result, I conducted both interviews and participant observations as a member of the organisation's team, with easier access to contacts and resources.

The criterion I assumed in selecting my interlocutors, as I chose to call the people I interacted with and collaborated with during the interviews, was first and foremost their current involvement in the movement's activities (as opposed to any historical involvement in its formation or the moment of departure from its structures). I did not take into account their age, gender, education, or place of residence, although this information appeared in most interviews or as part of the information provided around the interviews and meetings.

The format of the interviews was semi-structured using the list of disposals concerning the life episode of personal history of the activists' engagement in the movement (Chase, 2014), but also in relation to some events or performances, which was part of the participatory observation. The narrative interviews used a sociological approach that allowed for working with the activist element of the interlocutors' identities as an organisational cultural context. The narrative presented by the interlocutors also allowed for a parallel (re-)experiencing and naming of the activist experience and its institutional context within social movements (Ibidem).

I treated the interlocutors' narratives as socially situated interactions (Ibidem), although, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fourteen of the fifteen interviews took place via Zoom because the relationship with each person had been built prior to the onset of the pandemic, with an emphasis on the commonality of the activist experience (some of the interlocutors knew me previously from my previous engagement in social movements as well). The interviews took place when both parties (interviewer and interlocutor) were in their homes, in their safe spaces, with cameras on (except in one instance), and through casual interaction (indicated by the fact that some of the interlocutors were lying down, dimming their lights, smoking cigarettes, or cooking soup) and informal communication (indicated by the fact that the activists sometimes used blunt or un-self-censored language). Reserving time and a private space to talk seemed very comfortable, reducing external stimuli such as interactions with others in public space, and allowing the focus to be on the conversation. The idea of an empathic approach to the interviews was inspired by Kong, Mahoney and Plummer (Kong et al., 2001). The interactional voice of the citizen-researcher as a narrative strategy was conducive to building rapport in such a non-obvious space and time of confinement and isolation, and at times my personal experiences were also in dialogue with those narrated by the interlocutors. Some of them were already curious about my perspective and actions outside the interview structure itself, which made the relationship more symmetrical (Fontana & Frey, 2014). Therefore, at the same time, the analysis of my voice and my social positioning, interpretation and activist experience, described in a later section, were particularly important.

All the interviews were transcribed and then coded by means of the Atlas.ti 8 data analysis software, which supports qualitative data analysis. When transcribing the interviews, I made a decision not to transcribe them word-for-word, and not to include

intonation, repetitions, and pauses, in the interlocutors' utterances, or the emotional layer of the expression, taking into account the limitation of online interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2014). This, following S. Kvale's assertion that "transcripts are not copies or representations of some original reality, they are interpretative constructions that are useful tools for given purposes" (Kvale, 2007, p. 98). In line with the research goals, I conducted "an analysis focusing on meaning" (Kvale, 2007, p. 104). It took place according to the procedure proposed by Kvale, which covers the following research activities: meaning coding, meaning condensation, and meaning interpretation (Kvale, 2007, p. 104). Before starting the analysis, I created an initial list of codes (main analytical categories) related to the topics, structure, and forms of activism. The Atlas.ti 8 computer application significantly improves the analysis of the research material. It helps, for example, in the quick identification of codes, and enables the definition of relationships between the codes and the individual statements of the interlocutors. Detailed mind maps illustrating coding, grouping and categorisation based on the Atlas.ti 8 programme for Chapter 3: Data analysis translated into English can be found in Annex 3 of this thesis.

1.1.5. Selection criteria of social movements

The criteria for the research were selected based on historical context, but the scope of the research itself was not limited by this. All five criteria followed the theoretical framework related to new social movements theories (Castells, 2015; Paleczny, 2010; Schaeffer, 2014; Vanden et al., 2017). These did not directly fulfil one single theory, but are interrelated with the described theoretical frameworks. The criteria chosen are inspired by the theory of new social movements (Castells, 2010b; Paleczny, 2010; Vanden et al., 2017) and critical reflection from the perspective of the development of Polish movements (Ekiert et al., 2017; Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Vergara Polanska & Chimiak, 2016, 2016), but are also my own attempt to define the movements and their phenomenon, in line with the demand for a revision of thinking about civil society (Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017).

The five selection criteria of social movements based in Poland for the research project was one of the key decisions to make, as it heavily influenced both the

methodology and fact findings. The following criteria was identified, described, and followed:

- 1) Official identity of the social movement
- 2) Political engagement against the status quo
- 3) Democratic and participatory characteristics
- 4) International dimension of acting / action
- 5) Fewer than 10 years of operation in Poland

The first criteria is the official statement of engaged members of the group who describe themselves as a social movement. Mostly in the found in the form of official communication, a stated mission, or sometimes even in the name of the group. The declaration of being a social movement has strong implications in terms of organising and membership, but also in terms of a deep connection with values. The research is going deeper into the discussion and description of the idea of social movements in Poland and into the understanding of types and models of their organising. Still, the declarative statement in most of the cases is the result of the deeper reflection of its members and discussions among them as to how to position the group within the context of Polish civil society. All the movements use other external structures as legal entities, and are mostly registered as foundations under the Polish law or use third-party legal entities to represent them in various projects (especially when other organisations become members). The difference between the idea of the social and the civic is also important as the groups understand the limitations of the idea of citizenship and want to overcome it by focusing on social values.

The second criteria is the political engagement of the movement against the status quo in its vision of the world, goals, and strategies. Many activists understand and emphasise the difference between policy and politics. They see that the topics and values they stand for are deeply connected with power relations and the political system and are part of political debate. Still, social movements often formulate a principle to go beyond politics and place power in the hands of people or citizens. Activists direct their demands to decision makers, usually positioning themselves not as party members, but mostly as engaged citizens. Their voice has not been heard for years, and that is why they have decided to act in a different manner (such as through demonstrations, organising community, resistance, civic disobedience, alternative

ways of living). The struggle that they faced is motivated by political decisions or lack of political will, so they are part of a political struggle, but are not involved directly in party-political programs and decision-making processes. To some extent, we can say that social movements exist beyond the party system as their values and demands don't belong to any party's program and their main goal is to bring their ideas into the mainstream and prioritise them in public debate. For this research, it is important that the selected social movements are openly politically engaged and have overcome the narrative of being apolitical, as the approach of this research is investigating the social change, power relation structures, and the challenging political status quo at local at the national and global level. Fulfilling this criteria is essential to analysing documents and the communication of the social movements both online and offline.

The third criteria is the democratic and participatory characteristics of the movement. It is understood as a declarative approach of the movements to be inclusive and diverse among their members and for supporters to be like-minded (i.e., from different backgrounds, various sectors, different age groups, etc.). This criteria will be explored further during the data collection and fact findings process. In the field of pedagogy and adult learning, the education approach is the priority, so the hypothesis is that in more democratic and participatory structures, the learning process will be omnidirectional, communication will be much more open, and power relations will be challenged by members. Different strategies of leadership such as stewardship, rotation of leaders, or multi-leadership even inside one organisational structure seems to be innovative and shows how dynamic the movement is. Dispersed leadership into smaller groups influence also on taking responsibility and continuity of processes in the movement. Still many more opportunities for exchange, sharing and learning from each other appeared to be essential to analyse social learning.

The fourth criteria is the international dimension of acting, which means that similar movements organising and mobilising people in different parts of the world (not only in Europe) for the same cause and using the same framework of operating. The international dimension is also related to topics that the movements work with/for, and its global context, which is relevant not only in Poland, but also in other parts of the world to similar groups of people. Activists have the possibility to exchange and cooperate with movements globally, working in a multicultural context. It also shows how globalisation processes influence social life and issues, finding solutions and

exporting them to other countries and communities. The question of to what extent social issues are universal, and to what extent the adaptation of solutions at the national level meets peoples' needs and if we can claim that the organisation is grassroots even if the ideas and solutions are coming from the globalised world.

Finally, the fifth criteria is a temporal one. Social movements have a long history of struggle in Poland, before and after 1989, struggling against many social issues such as women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental justice, workers' rights, democracy, and legal justice. The assumption of the research is to investigate the movements in the present moment, showing the context of their establishment, but also focusing on the current situation and struggles. This criteria was motivated by stepping away from the historical approach of the research, but focusing more on the up-to-date context of operating, while also recognising a shift in social movement theories and making links between the methods and international dimension of operating with the age of the movements and the generation of the leaders of each group. While designing this research project, a gap in scientific analyses was detected as many younger movements in Poland and Europe have not yet been of interest to social researchers and scientists. What is also new is that the younger movements do not stick to historical narratives and are much more flexible when referring to current issues, and do not focus on building their historical identity. Because of this, the researcher can even speak about some kind of ahistorical concept, but with a strong focus on the future and how we can shape the specific place or the world for future generations. Of course, it is still worth remembering the historical context of the establishment of social movements in Poland after 1989 and recognising some continuation of the narrative, which is more like short-term interventions, rather than a linear concept for developing civil society in Poland.

As the research has a critical and engaged approach, my more than 20 years' of personal experience in the civic sector was also an important factor in selecting the social movements for the project. My point of departure in this project was like-minded movements dealing with environmental justice, social justice and inclusion, while human rights and global challenges were also taken into account. One of the goals of the research is to reflect on enabling environments for learning in social movements in Poland, crossing generations, styles of leadership and membership, and how to support their struggle through scientific thinking. This piece is an educational work

supporting the groups by engaging theories and critical reflection on how to change the world.

1.1.6. Characteristics of each movement

Taking into account the above-mentioned, criteria three movements have been selected for the research project: Food Sovereignty Movement – Nyeleni Poland, Akcja Demokracja Foundation, and Extinction Rebellion Poland. All of them fulfilled all criteria and their members agreed to take part in the research project in interviews and as a collective in participatory observation of their activities.

1.1.6.1. Food Sovereignty Movement – Nyeleni Poland

Nyeleni Poland was established by Polish activists who took part in the 2nd European Food Sovereignty Forum, 25-31 October 2016, in Kluj -Napoka, Romania, as an informal network of cooperation for individuals and organisations taking care of alternative food systems and understanding food as a human right. On their website, 45 non-governmental organizations, ecological farms, folk universities, cooperatives, and experts are mentioned as official members from Poland (Nyeleni Polska, n.d.-a). The activists use their full names, calling themselves a food sovereignty movement. Nyeleni has listed five main areas of cooperation: production and consumption, food distribution, work and social conditions, natural resources, and common good and public policy. According to the activists' description, Nyeleni Poland is based on three main scopes of work: networking and exchange by the Food Sovereignty Forum, research and learning about agroecology and permaculture by AgroPerma Lab Foundation, and advocacy for food sovereignty in Poland by the Żywa Ziemia Coalition (eng. *Fertile Ground Coalition*).

The goals of the movement are described on their website as follows:

- 1) Inclusion of the term food sovereignty in public debate and the promotion of family farming and agroecology in contradiction to industrial agriculture and agrochemicals.
- 2) Provide facilities for small-scale farmers and producers to enter the market by promotion of direct food selling (such as food cooperatives, community-supported agriculture, marketplaces, and direct public procurement contracts).

- 3) Establishing mass the Food Sovereignty Movement in Poland and its strong representation.
- 4) Enabling places for meetings and dialogues for members of the the Movement via online platforms.
- 5) Developing and strengthening international cooperation for food sovereignty.

The concept of the food sovereignty movement relies on a recognition of the fundamental difference between the terms ‘food security’ and ‘food sovereignty’. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* (FAO UN, 2006), ‘Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’ Food security focuses on the delivery of food according to preferences, but social and economic aspects are not distinguished, and it focuses only on the individual. The essential difference between the terms is the distinction between simply having access to food versus the right to food and specifying this both for individuals and countries. ‘Food sovereignty’ is described in detail by La Via Campesina (La Via Campesina, 2003): ‘Food sovereignty is the peoples’, Countries’ or State Unions’ RIGHT to define their agricultural and food policy, without any dumping vis-à-vis third countries.’ This includes:

- prioritising local agricultural production in order to feed people, provide access to land, water, seeds, and credit for peasants and landless people; hence the need for land reforms, for fighting against GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), for free access to seeds and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.
- the right of farmers and peasants to produce food plus consumers’ rights to decide what they consume and how or by whom it is produced.
- the right of countries to protect themselves from agricultural and food imports that are priced too low.
- agricultural prices that are linked to production costs, which can be achieved if the countries or unions of states are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves to sustainable farm production and if they control production on their internal market so as to avoid structural surpluses.

- populations taking part in agricultural policy choices.
- the recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food.

For the food sovereignty movement, it is important to understand that it is embedded in a political context and described in relation to market and neoliberal mechanisms. The founding meeting of the food sovereignty movement took place in 2007 in Mali, where 500 people from 80 countries decided to strengthen the food sovereignty movement all over the world. Among their members the movement listed the following groups: “peasants/small farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, small-scale fisher people, agriculture and food workers; and supporting constituencies, such as urban poor; rural and urban women’s and youth organisations; consumers, environmental, justice, solidarity, human rights organizations; community-based food movements” (Nyeleni Europe & Central Asia, n.d.). Nyeleni Poland is a member of Nyeleni Europe, sharing with them not only a logo, but also the story of the name and the philosophy of cooperation. The official declaration of Nyeleni emphasises the role of collective struggle: “In Nyéléni, through numerous debates and interactions, we are deepening our collective understanding of food sovereignty and learning about the realities of the struggles of our respective movements to retain autonomy and regain our powers. We now understand better the tools we need to build our movement and advance our collective vision” (*DECLARATION OF NYÉLÉNI*, 2007) and also directly states that they are fighting against the status quo by calling it out as imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, and patriarchy.

The name of the worldwide movement is related to a powerful symbol from Mali, the women and mothers who farm and bring food to their children and others in need, even when the environment isn't favourable to her. The recognition of this African symbol, gender inequality and the struggle for food were important enough all over the world to use the same name for all branches of the movement. The complete story of the name is noted in one of the Nyeleni's documents (*Nyeleni Was a Woman...*, 2006).

What is important is that the Nyeleni Poland – Food Sovereignty Movement advocates for systemic change and participates in political debate highlighting that their goals are part of public debate and political engagement. Through public and

political engagement activists understand their contribution to the political discourse, learning through the process of close peer-to-peer learning through advocacy work aimed at decision makers on various levels from the local to the global. At the same time, Nyeleni Poland doesn't support any of the existing political parties in Poland. Their activists are also far away from establishing their own political party. The activists described the organising model as non-linear and transitory, but also used metaphors emphasising how individual engagement builds complex structures like an ecosystem.

The most important gatherings of the movement include:

- Intergeneration meeting of farmers for food sovereignty, 1-3.12.2017, Grzybowo, Poland
- 1st Food Sovereignty Forum, 25-28 January 2018, Warsaw, Poland
- Izera's Food Sovereignty Forum, 2-3 March 2019, Kopaniec, Poland
- 2nd Food Sovereignty Forum, 30.01-2.02.2020, Warsaw, Poland
- The movement is active on a YouTube channel with many interviews and open access webinars (Nyeleni Polska, n.d.-b).

1.1.6.2. Extinction Rebellion Poland

The beginnings of Extinction Rebellion (XR) as a grassroots socio-political movement goes back to mid-2018, when 94 academics organized the campaign Raising up! and signed support for the XR campaign against climate crisis. The formation of XR was considerably influenced by numerous reports on climate change issued by the UN-affiliated Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and in particular by the special report Global Warming of 1.5°C of 8th October 2018 (*Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*, 2018). The main point of the report is that, with the global temperature level being now 1°C higher than before the industrial age, its rise by more than 1.5°C will enhance the destructive climatic developments (droughts, fires, floods, hurricanes) and aggravate their ramifications (biodiversity loss, inaccessibility of potable water, famine), which humans will no longer be able to control. In other words, when the last

‘security threshold’ – that of 1.5°C – is exceeded, life on Earth will be annihilated (IPCC, 2018). Extinction Rebellion defines itself as: ‘an international social movement which uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse’ (‘About Us,’ 2020) posed by the global climate crisis. The XR logo shows an hourglass enclosed within a circle. As its activists explain, ‘[t]he symbol (...) represents extinction. The circle signifies the planet, while the hourglass inside serves as a warning that time is rapidly running out for many species. The world is currently undergoing a mass extinction event, and this symbol is intended to help raise awareness of the urgent need for change in order to address this crisis’ (‘Extinction Symbol,’ n.d.).

The movement has three main demands: firstly, to tell the truth about climate crisis, which is targeted at governments and other institutions to inform society about the risk. Secondly, to act now to make the change; otherwise, it will be too late. Finally, to go beyond politics to push governments to establish citizen assemblies based on strict rules and implementation of its recommendations on both local and national levels. The demands are joint for the movements all over the world, so the idea is unified on a global scale. The common document for all XR branches is also 10 Principles (in Polish understood more as Rules and Values) that support each activists engagement. The principles are formulated in inclusive language, starting each sentence with WE, understood as a group, and not individual, movement:

- 1) “We have a shared vision of change. Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.
- 2) We set our mission on what is necessary. Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change - using ideas such as "Momentum-driven organising" to achieve this.
- 3) We need a regenerative culture. Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.
- 4) We openly challenge ourselves and our toxic system. Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.
- 5) We value reflecting and learning. Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.

- 6) We welcome everyone and every part of everyone. Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.
- 7) We actively mitigate for power. Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.
- 8) We avoid blaming and shaming. We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.
- 9) We are a non-violent network. Using non-violent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.
- 10) We are based on autonomy and decentralisation. We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power.

Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion” (*About Us*, n.d.)

XR worldwide as a core strategy for action lists nonviolent direct actions and civil disobedience, and they are already well-known for their performative actions such as a die-in when a group of activists pretends that they are dead in a public space, usually in front of important buildings or institutions or red-robed widows walking down the streets or appearing in public spaces as the spectres of climate crisis.

The movement promotes horizontal structures close to the idea of a holacracy, without leaders and decision-making processes driven by members in so-called self-organising structures (SOS). Still, some of the activists in the United Kingdom, like Roger Hallam, Gail Bradbrook, and Simon Bramwell, are well-known as XR representatives and also for the controversies that they provoked. Based on the same demands and structures, many XR groups have been established in countries around the world and global support for the movement exists (*XR Global Support Team*, n.d.).

The Polish branch of XR was established at the beginning of 2019, with activists speaking about it as a result of the failure of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) in 2018 in Katowice, Poland. Four people from two major cities in Poland, Wrocław and Warsaw, began establishing the movement by contacting and engaging people on a local level and also by receiving support from XR in other countries, especially in the UK and in Europe. The Polish structure of XR consists of local groups from 14 Polish cities (Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław, Torun, Poznan, Gdansk/Gdynia/Sopot, Opole, Łódź,

Leszno, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Silesia, Gorzów Wielkopolski, and Szczecin), and two national circles (Operations & Support) and XR Youth branch. According to internal communication channels, XR Poland has around 2,400 people supporting their ideas (based on people registered on the main internal communication channel Mattermost, 7/10/2021). XR are active in social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (FB: <https://www.facebook.com/XRPolska>; Twitter: @XRPolska, Instagram: @extinctionrebellionpolska, YT: <https://www.youtube.com/c/ExtinctionRebellionPoland>), but there are not too many documents or official statements available publicly. One of their first recognised actions was a die-in performance in Wrocław on June 7th, 2019 (Extinction Rebellion Wrocław, 2019) where activists pretended to be dead in front of one of the famous bank offices. The bank was engaged in supporting the coal and mining industries in Poland. In 2019, other performative actions such as Past/Future Funeral (23.07.2019), Red Widows march (28.09.2019), Black Friday & Red Rebels (30.11.2019), Gallows on Christmas Market (1.12.2019), Christmas Eve 2050 (22.12.2019), and Declaration of Rebellion (27.09.2019) – the first civic disobedience action blocking one of the main traffic circles in Warsaw, Poland, took place. The first local, political success of XR was noted in Wrocław when the president of the city declared the establishment of a climate alarm in the city due to the expected climate catastrophe (18.10.2019). Starting in 2020, actions were planned in various places in Poland, including performances, strikes, demonstrations, and blockades (both by group and individuals).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these actions came to a standstill, and activists promoted the movement through online actions and some small performative events such as #tęsknięzatomczłowieku (eng.#*HumanImissYou*), through showing the faces of activists and their motivations to be part of XR Poland (Extinction Rebellion Polska, 2020) and also by putting banners in a few places in Polish cities (mostly Warsaw and Wrocław). September 2020 was the most active time for the movement as activists co-organised the Big March for Climate (5.09.2020 in Warsaw), which launched a week of meetings, actions, and gatherings, ending with a blockade of one of the the main streets in Warsaw – Swietokrzyska street– during the Monday morning rush hour as a nonviolent act of civil disobedience (10.09.2020). Following the September, rebellion many cities organised their own local or regional actions.

Also, activists with XR logos and flags took part in many other demonstrations and actions. The most famous one was the Women Strike Protests on October 22, 2020, and many days after in reaction to a ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal which tightened the law on abortion in Poland to be one of the most restrictive in Europe. When two activists affiliated with XR Poland, together with one of the leaders of Women Strike, entered the space in front of the Tribunal, they placed there a statement responding to the political decision and launched flares. The group was caught by police without any resistance, as all the activists called their action nonviolent civil disobedience. Officially, XR Poland has never supported any other actions or demonstrations as the structure of the movement doesn't have any official body that would be able to make decisions on behalf of the movement and because, based on the 10 Principles, each person who follows them is acting on behalf of XR. This means that it is more the decision of individuals or specific groups. However, there are still some tensions, discussions, and disagreements between different groups inside the movement.

At the beginning of 2021, XR Poland launched a new series of actions entitled Time to Rebel (pol. *Czas na bunt*), with a written manifesto and a short video clip (Extinction Rebellion Polska, 2021a, 2021b) as a call for an appeal to decision makers to organise Citizens Assembly on the climate crisis within three months from 24th November 2020. Activists finished their text with: "Waiting is finished/ It's time to rebel/ No compromises to protect Mother Earth". As a part of Time to Rebel, many new types of actions appeared, such as a series of lone blockades on Polish streets, solidarity demonstrations in front of courts where XR activists were taken due to civil disobedience, visual actions on streets, performative protests in front of the Polish parliament in Warsaw and Catholic radio station – Radio Maryja in Torun, a group of activists stuck to the door of Polish Parliament Office in Warsaw, another blockades of streets, such as Jerozolimskie Avenue in Warsaw took place (26.02.2021). At the same time, other educational activities took place like online meetings with experts on climate crisis and citizen participation in cooperation with other events (like Auditoriver Festival) and a series of radio broadcasts prepared by XR activists in "Broadcast for Earth" on Radio Kapital (eng. Capital Radio) – a niche alternative online radio station, which popularised social movements and civil society

organisations such as Greenpeace, Nyeleni Poland, and Strike for Earth (*Pasmo Dla Ziemi*, 2020)

1.1.6.3. Akcja Demokracja (Action Democracy)

Akcja Demokracja describes itself as a movement of engaged people on issues that are important for them. The core values which led the movement are: human rights, protection of the natural environment, and the mitigation of social and economic inequalities. The goal is described as social change in the direction of a better and more just society through joint activities using new technologies. Social change is also identified as political change, and as a factor of the change, joint, vocal, and clear actions are suggested in contradiction to the behind-the-scenes games of political parties (Akcja Demokracja, n.d.). The difference between policy and politics is emphasised in the official narratives of Akcja Demokracja and one of its former leaders – Weronika Paszewska, who said “we are [an] organisation of people, not politics and the reason is obvious for us” (Pacewicz & Leniarska, 2018).

Akcja Demokracja as a movement strengthens freedom of speech, the right to assembly, and association (understood broader than trade unions), and encourages active citizenship. Democracy, which is in the name of the movement, means not only participation in elections on the European, national, and local levels, but also democratic participation in other decision-making processes using existing mechanisms and introducing new mechanisms for public consultation and contribution. Activists from the movement referred to the monitoring of development and implementation policies in their area of interest, emphasising the importance of the watchdog role of social movements and civil society organisations. Still, the main strategy is to conduct campaigns online through petitions and appeals together with collecting money for the cause, and offline through meetings with decision makers to deliver people’s demands, demonstrations, and visual actions (like billboards and screenings on buildings of important institutions, etc.).

Akcja Demokracja is a multi-issue organisation that allows people to choose one or more topic they are interested in and to join online campaigns by signing petitions, which is an agile and adept way to quickly act under specific time demands. The online petitions have been getting more popular for the last decade mostly because they are easily accessible for people and the cost of participation is rather low (time to sign, small amount of money if you want to answer of fundraising related to the cause,

spreading the information using your communication channels such as social media). The organisation offers more possibilities for engagement, such as sending e-mail or Twitter messages to decision makers, sometimes some offline actions to participate, but even signing petitions immediately adds you to a list of people supporting the idea and being part of the movement. In practice, one electronic signature is enough to feel that you have contributed to an important cause and are showing your commitment.

The idea of gathering people around one issue takes a short-term perspective, so when there is a need to fight for or against something, it has the theory of change behind it to mobilise and organise massive movements in a short time and to show the scale of the response and to emphasize its importance. Akcja Demokracja understands that hundreds of thousands online signatures have an impact, especially on decision makers (usually a few thousand reached is closer to average for the most popular campaigns in recent years). Still, the member-led concept assumes the interest of activists, so people already in communication with the organisation have some possibilities to express their interests in social issues and prioritise how Akcja teams shape the next set of campaigns by filling in online opinion pools and selected groups which responded to more involved questionnaires sent out via e-mail. The democratic approach is realised in a huge group of people that easily feel part of the movement and have the possibility to shape the agenda of the organisation by using certain types of tools and moments open for consultations by leading a team.

Akcja Demokracja is formally registered as a foundation under Polish law, with a director and team of campaigners hired to shape the campaign. Akcja is also associated with the Online Progressive Engagement Network (OPEN), whose organisations build on the same know-how as Campact from Germany, 38 Degrees from the United Kingdom, Delic from Romania, aHang from Hungary, and MoveOn from the USA, and are active in exchanging ideas and learning from each other concerning political progressive ideas, using technologies, and building movements. The OPEN model is promoted to similar groups around the world, working on 6 continents, 19 countries, and with more than 20 million activists. All the OPEN members are sharing the same values and strategic DNA to match their local individuality and context (The OPEN Network, n.d.). The international dimension of acting is secured by using the same operating model of other organisations in Europe and throughout the world and also through strong networking between members of

OPEN and joint actions such as publications in The Guardian or Independent related to funds supporting the rule of law in the European Union (EU) (December 2020) (Akcja Demokracja, 2020c) or solidarity actions with #BlackLivesMatter signed by 143,000 people from 21 movements from 19 countries (June 2020) (Akcja Demokracja, 2020a).

Akcja Demokracja was established by four activists as a start-up organisation in 2015 with the idea of creating an organisation similar to 38 degrees in the UK and Campact in Germany. In the founding group were: Piotr Trzaskowski – climate activist working at the European level on green energy transformation, Aleksandra Szymczyk – feminist activist, coordinator of feminist demonstrations in Poland, Weronika Paszewska – activist working on global social justice and sustainable development, and Maciej Koziej – activist focusing on digital rights and food cooperatives (Akcja Demokracja, 2020b).

The first, most visible and popular offline action was Chain of Lights (pol. *Łańcuch Światła*) in June 2017, which established Akcja Demokracja as one of the key actors among social movements (Akcja Demokracja, 2018). The demonstration was against court reforms proposed in Poland by the right-wing, ruling party, Law and Justice, which was a set of bills expanding the power of the minister of justice from the ruling party, empowering Parliament to directly choose the members of the National Council of the Judiciary, whose role is to protect the independence of the courts and subjugate the Supreme Court – which supervises lower courts – to executive power. Experts and democratic political parties criticised the idea, declaring the reforms a coup ('Thousands Rally against Court Reforms in Poland', 2017). Akcja Demokracja organised a series of political protests-without politicians on the stage, but with citizens and activists who were worried about the state of democracy in Poland and who were fighting against the proposed changes to the law by holding up candles and lights as symbols of wakefulness or mourning. Based on media coverage of these events, thousands of people went out on the streets in most of the biggest cities and towns in Poland to protest in the summer 2017, and they returned in late 2017 due to another set of bills and its implementation.

For the last four years, Akcja Demokracja has strengthened its position among civil society organisations working on various campaigns towards a more progressive, democratic, and diverse Polish society, and by challenging decision makers on many

occasions at all levels of the government from the president to local authorities. The movement is mostly recognised in major cities and among citizens who criticise the ruling party and rightist politicians.

In 2020 and 2021, when this research project was conducted, some of the most visible campaigns were the following:

- A series of campaigns related to the presidential election in the summer of 2020, like summary of president Andrzej Duda term in front of the presidential palace, a performative action on Plac Konstytucji (Constitution Square), challenging the president on climate crisis and coal mining (July 9, 2020)
- A solidarity campaign with The Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar as “spokesman of our rights”, #MuremZaBodnarem, and summary of his term of office as a documentary movie released on February 7, 2021, together with an interview with Bodnar and activists from civil society organisations and movements commenting on his work and engagement, watched by more than 78 000 people on social media (the whole campaign lasted from the second half of 2020 through the beginning of 2021)
- Abortion is a human right – more than 570 000 signatures collected via an online petition, banners, “Passage of shame” (photos of 110 parliamentarians and judges from the Tribunal who supported the abortion ban – a ”name and shame” campaign strategy), supporting demonstrations with banners (October and November 2020)
- An antifascist campaign against collecting money for neo-fascist movements – for example, the National Guard’s crowdfunding website Zrzutka.pl to organise groups of young men to fight with women’s protests in front of churches. Akcja Demokracja was pushing the board of the company to close these money-collecting actions, as they were promoting violence and hate speech. The company answered with a statement against Akcja Demokracja, claiming that it is based on acting against their personal interest. As a result of the trial, the lawsuit was dismissed and the campaign was assessed as permitted criticism (2020/2021, sentenced on July 2021).
- Supporting judges who are against disassembly of Polish courts, such as Igor Tuleja, Waldemar Żurek, and Paweł Juszczyszyn, among others, through

online petitions, solidarity actions, and giving them visibility on Akcja's channels of communication (ongoing in 2020 and 2021)

- #CzarnekOut campaign against nationalistic, homophobic, radical Catholic, and Minister of Education and Science in Poland – Przemysław Czarnek, and his reforms in the formal education system with billboards in different Polish cities, an online campaign with #CzarnekOut and a civil no-confidence vote which gathered almost 120 000 activists and supporters, and small protests in front of schools at the beginning of the school year (September 2021)

According to the information from the organisation in 2021, there are around 535 000 activists in the communication loop engaged with different topics and the values important to Akcja Demokracja. The organisation is formally registered as a foundation under Polish law with an advisory board, board, executive director, and a team of campaigners and specialists in IT, finance, and administration (22 people all together). The structure of the team working within the organisation is hierarchic, but for the purposes of this research the movement is understood more broadly as all the activists are in the communication loop, and where the entry point is rather easy and access to the information is based on receipt of an e-mail, which is the same for all people interested in various respective issues. In communication with activists, the movement is transparent and informs on a yearly basis on the structure of its budget, including costs and funding. According to its latest mailing, Akcja Demokracja claims that more than 85% of their budget is financed by individual activists thanks to small donations (between 10 to 100 PLN), many of them on a monthly basis, which means that activists are the core source of funding for the everyday work of the organisation.

There are also groups of activists permanently cooperating with the organisation through offline work, like offline campaigning and local actions. Among other tools, there is also a campaign website called Nasza Demokracja (Our Democracy; <https://naszademokracja.pl/>), where all online petitions can be posted and signatures collected if they respect the values and rules of the movement. This space is created for local activists to contribute their ideas and issues, formulated by them or together with campaigners from the movement and to support and promote via all Akcja's communication channels.

1.2. Challenges in the research project

1.2.1 Challenges due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a direct impact on the empirical material collection phase, as the isolation coincided with the participatory observation plan and planned interviews. Due to the pandemic and closures, events that had been planned for months by the movements did not take place, and the possibility to meet in public spaces was severely restricted. In addition to the restrictions, the emotions of fear and anxiety associated with the new social situation, which did not encourage interlocutors to meet face-to-face, were a significant complication.

It took several months to change the research tool and interview methods as a consequence of the prolonged uncertainty and isolation. The use of technological solutions was a compromise in this crisis due to the timing of the project, but also due to the difficulty of determining when the situation would improve enough for us to return to normal collective functioning. In retrospect, the decision to conduct the interviews online due to the long period of isolation, and later distrust of meeting in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was justified. Although qualitative research methodologists had misgivings about this form of interviewing and recognised its limitations (Fontana & Frey, 2014), given the moment in world history, this type of research practice arguably developed in a significant way during this time, the effects of which will be seen in the texts published next.

The situation also had a significant impact on the participant observation agenda, which shifted its focus from participation in events in the public space to internal activities (these also took place at the time without much disruption mainly through online tools). This shift ultimately shaped the research project by developing the thread of my membership identity within the study of the communities of these movements (Angrosino, 2014), and by creating a dialogic relationship at the individual and group level. This shift also allowed my research role to crystallise with situational awareness and to see power in a relational way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

From the perspective of the completed research project and the ever-recurring waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, I evaluate the changes made and the flexibility due

to external challenges as an appropriate research procedure, which, while achieving its objectives, also took care of the safety and comfort of the interlocutors.

1.2.2. Citizen-researcher standpoint

Apart from methodological decisions and the dilemmas of the paradigm and method of the research project, another important issue was to reflect on parts of my identity, which play a crucial role for the research topic, decisions about the PhD project, areas of interests, and my role as “a citizen-researcher” (D. Foley & Valenzuela, 2014, p. 335).

I am a white woman born in Poland, from the majority ethnic group, living in a town next to the country's capital, in a working-class family, and am the first generation with a university education. Starting in 1999, I was engaged in social movements and civil society organisations, starting from an anarchist collective of actions in my hometown, then feminist movements and networks working both in Poland and regionally in Central and Eastern Europe, non-governmental organisations working on global social justice and global education, anti-discriminatory education, cooperating with many organizations, movements and networks in Poland, the European Union, and globally.

I have been working for civil society organisations professionally for almost 20 years as a project coordinator, program manager, trainer, facilitator, advocate, and expert on global development and progressive education (both formal and informal). Over the last 20 years, I have taken part in many demonstrations, protests, local actions, and online petitions to express my support of global social justice, human rights, rights of minorities, anti-fascists, and anti-war statements, among many others. In addition, I have participated in many projects and initiatives connecting human rights and global justice with the formal education sector together with teachers, schools, teacher training institutions, and universities.

My political baggage (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2014) is growing up in a time of systemic change in Poland (between communism and capitalism and a free market economy), in a state seeing an expanding role of the Catholic Church and growing internal resistance to the Catholic religion, dynamic technological change, entry into

the European Union, and, in the last decade, facing a crisis of democracy, and growing nationalism and authoritarian power. At the same time, with a growing consciousness that has been shaped by third- and fourth-wave feminism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism and deconstruction, as well as gender sensitivity and alternative culture.

I see my academic contribution as a continuation of my activism and social engagement. My biography strongly influenced my choice of the area I explored and my research perspectives and methods, but also because, as a social activist, I was missing engaged projects in pedagogy.

“As activists, we need something more from theory or research; we hope for the ability to think beyond our current understanding and identify perspectives that help us develop our practice, form alliances and learn from other people’s struggles” (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p. 4)

On the one hand, being a fellow member of social movements, a person in their circle who fights and rebels against the same issues and leads actions around the same values. On the other hand, by acquiring academic competence and writing skills, I have entered an exclusive group of experts (D. Foley & Valenzuela, 2014). My involvement in the political process from a civic level is therefore complemented by an academic or research background. This project is also about capturing the knowledge and reflections of activists for my future work in movements and organisations.

It is worth mentioning that Carr and Kemmis’ offer a description (Carr & Kemmis, 2004) of teachers who become researchers as a result of the intellectual and social ferment in which they participated and discuss the resulting sense of obligation to be critical and reflective of their own practice and to transcend limitations. This idea is also an inspiration to speak and write about joining theory and practice. Theory is understood as universal and timeless in contradiction to practice which is particular and urgent. This dichotomy is connected to the historical understanding of these two concepts and that intellectual tradition that, according to the authors, have to be overcome. Carr and Kemmis emphasise the imperative of the participatory dimension of critical educational science: “(t)hese arrangements have individual and social consequences which include both enlightenment and alienation, social solidarity and social division, the empowerment of persons and the authoritarianism of contemporary

society. Through critical educational science, participants explore such contradictions and seek to resolve them” (Carr & Kemmis, 2004, p. 158). The theory of change is behind each engaged and critical research when both practitioner and researcher have the same goals and the dualism of this role is transcendent.

One of the interlocutors said that *he is aware that it is his wish simply that academics nevertheless plant their asses with them on the asphalt in Poland (IL_9)*, but if I think about my role in the academy I see it precisely as a kind of interruption in my process of becoming or learning to be a conscious and critical global citizen and activist, taking to the streets and fighting for critical social justice in the world.

1.2.3. What this project is, and what it is not

The critical perspective that accompanied me as a citizen-researcher (D. Foley & Valenzuela, 2014, p. 335) in the project allowed me to understand and theorise social change as a person directly involved in the political process in which social movements participate. This perspective also allowed me to consciously make decisions at subsequent stages of the research project that completed it, but thereby abandoned equally compelling or relevant directions. In this section, I want to provide some arguments explaining the decisions that shaped this project in terms of the research method, but also relevant theoretical assumptions. This chapter was inspired by numerous conversations both during the PhD seminars conducted by Ewa Kurantowicz at the Faculty of Applied Studies at the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław, academic conferences (including, in particular, the ESREA Network), discussions around conference presentations of fragments of this project and collaborative work on articles, and comments from reviewers and editors of publications in which texts I co-wrote appeared.

Firstly, the biographical approach in the context of the activist histories of the interlocutors and the construction of their activist identities, as well as each person's linking of other social roles to activism was very interesting and captivating, especially in the context of the individual learning dimension or the creation of activist mythologies undertaken by the research project. Biographical learning is a prominent adult education direction (Alheit, 2018; González-Monteagudo, 2017; West, 2010),

and linking learning, especially in the context of lifelong learning, to biography is an important aspect, especially in a community in transition. In the context of activist biographies, this perspective also appears in the texts of Polish researchers (Bilon-Piórko, 2022). Elements of this perspective appear in the project (social capital in the sense of Peter Alheit (Alheit, 2009), but given the aim of describing and critically analysing the learning process in the group dimension and the inclusion of structural solutions in organisations as an element that reinforces certain trends, such as the internationalisation of social practices, a biographical approach would deprive the project of this dimension. Reflecting on conducting critical studies from a biographical perspective (Finnegan, 2021) indicates the possibility of combining the personal and institutional dimensions of research work. Also, it points to a new kind of insight and the attainment of a deeper reflexivity in the social dimension and an extension of the emancipatory dimension of critical theory through a fuller and nuanced hearing of the minority voice of individuals or groups through their biographical embeddedness. Bringing these two perspectives together and finding their place in it is promising for the future. However, the collected empirical material was focused on the activists' participation in a specific, pre-selected, and described social movement, and on the activities and structures of these movements. Because of the individuals' links to other civil society organisations or their social engagements, this approach would have significantly broadened the research area to a diverse and progressive civil society, which in turn is a vague concept in the scope of the study.

Secondly, the project did not set out to conduct a comparative study of selected movements on the basis of labelled criteria, as the title of the paper might suggest, but to select three social movements that could be scaled or placed on a spectrum by radicality of views, formalisation, and model of structure. However, such an approach, although interesting research-wise, would neither meet the assumption of the engaged and supportive nature of the project, nor the lessons for new social movements in Poland that can contribute to their development. Therefore, even referring to theoretical typologies such as Troll & Krause (Troll & Krause, 2016) or Curley (Curley, et al., 2018), I only presented organisations in a spectrum and did not provide any explicit classification. I also chose not to create my own typology of movements on the basis of this study, because in a democratic and participatory approach in informal education, it is useful to transcend systemic or scientific schemas in favour

of counter-hegemonic actions and, in line with the direction outlined by the subjects of the study, recognising the diversity of activism, but also the common values of the movements described.

Thirdly, the historical context of the development of civil society in Poland after 1989 was significantly limited in the project. At the planning stage, the project did not assume a description of the historical dimension of the activities of civil society organisations, hence one of the criteria for the selection of movements related to the time of their activities. New social movements are the subject of mainly sociological analysis and research, and this provides an important context for this work, though, due to its andragogical nature, it was important that only the necessary references appear in this respect. However, I have left the historical development of social movements in Poland in the 21st century for sociologists to analyse (Ekiert et al., 2017; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017; Vergara Polanska & Chimiak, 2016). The idea of the research project is not so much to describe movements historically, but through critical analysis to support their actions and strengthen their voice for critical social justice (Bailey, 2017). That said, this does not mean that the project itself is ahistorical. Rather, it is deeply embedded in the evolution and revolution that social movements are effecting in social reality both in Poland and globally. This study already has, in part, a historical value for female and male activists at the time of publication, which was summed up by one interlocutor that science can't keep up with reality, dare I say it certainly can't keep up with activist reality, but capturing the momentum of the development of the three movements was an important aim of this research idea.

Fourthly, political engagement in the context of public pedagogy (Sandlin et al., 2010) and movement action from the perspective of action in the public sphere and power relations between the governmental, private, and social sectors would be a perspective that could continue, expand, and complement the project. This direction would be coherent both in the context of Gert Biesta's learning democracy (Biesta, 2011; Biesta et al., 2014) and functioning in public spaces (Giroux & Witkowski, 2010). Such a theoretical perspective was also proposed by Danny Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch et al., 2021) in one of his recent articles, also in the context of the concept of social learning. In line with the critical paradigm, by describing and revealing my position as a researcher involved in social movements in Poland, as well

as through participant observation and having an insight into the daily work and involvement of activists and the structures and processes within movements, the aim of my project was to show a perspective from the inside on both the individual and collective level. It is also significant that the selected movements are just building their social base and, although they are all aiming at massification, their internal constitution is developing in a dynamic way and is a multidimensional learning process, also for activities outside the movement and in the public sphere, aimed at people outside the structures. Arguably, turning to public pedagogy would influence the selection of social movements to be studied in terms of their performative and artistic activities in the public space, which are not the practice of at least Nyeleni Polska.

The above points probably do not exhaust all the possibilities and potentials of this project. The decisions to abandon some of them were not easy, but they allowed the project to take its final shape and to find a space and perspective within adult learning that had not been analysed and interpreted in this way before.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research project embedded in the field of adult learning, the perspective of new social movements and the idea of global citizenship.

In the first section, I present the pedagogical theories that were important guiding points in the selection of the adult learning literature and led me to choose the category of social learning. This is discussed in detail in the next section based on Danny Wildemeersch's definition (Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999, 2014).

In the second section, I refer to the sociological recognition of new social movements and network society (Castells, 2004, 2010b, 2010a, 2015). I present the context of social movements and their structures in both local and global perspectives.

In the third section, I refer to the category of global citizenship (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014; V. Andreotti, 2011; Davies et al., 2018; Mansouri et al., 2017; O'Byrne, 2003) and the global dimension of social movements and NGOs. The critical global perspective, critical pedagogy, or radical new humanity within the organisation typologies discussed, bring these approaches closer to activism.

The chapter concludes with the theoretical category of learning activism (Choudry et al., 2012; Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010), which combines an adult learning perspective with a global perspective and engagement with social movements and provides a conceptual bracket for the theoretical framework presented.

2.1. Social learning

2.1.1. On the way to social learning

This chapter presents my exploration of adult learning theories within the research project, which focused on finding the collective learning dimension and stressed its social and civic dimensions arising both in values, reflection, and actions taken in public spaces as well as in group participation. Some of the theories referred to remained only at a broader context, some turned out to be dead ends for various reasons, but their role in shaping my theoretical perspective in this project cannot be overestimated. Not all of the numerous attempts to explore the field of adult learning

are listed here, but those described are important steps in this project that are worth mentioning before I move on to characterise social learning as a chosen theoretical category.

In the globalised world, where most of adult learning is described, measured, financially calculated, and market-oriented, this research project is focused on lifelong learning in the context of activism and participation in alternative social movements. Emphasising the role of nonformal and informal learning as a process which is understood as a new form of relationship between people and their environment, has the potential to create learning opportunities. The idea of learning away from school, the university and formal processes, but inside society and creating new connections between learners and the social world has been described as a network of possibilities by Illich in his critical study, *Deschooling society* (Illich, 2010). While designing educational networks and the role of independent educator, Illich purported that intellectual leadership in society is needed and requires open-minded and engaged individuals who act for the common good and values rather than manipulate others or create things for individual interest only.

The historical context of lifelong learning idea is worth further elaboration to illustrate one of the elements of the basis of this concept, which shaped the research project. European society has been motivated by a focus on knowledge and the economy and it has been criticised from various educational perspectives (Alheit, 2018; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Gravani & Zarifis, 2014a; Guimarães & Antunes, 2014). This is strongly related to ideas such as adaptive competitiveness and employability promoted by multinational institutions such as the European Council (*A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.*, 2000) and OECD (*What Works in Innovation in Education: Combating Exclusion through Adult Learning.*, 1997), and has been elaborated from a critical perspective by Lima & Guimaraes (Lima & Guimarães, 2011). The definition of lifelong learning includes formal, non-formal, informal learning, and recognising synergies between all forms of learning in a lifelong context. Alheit (Alheit, 2018) claims that in the 21st century there was a consensus on lifelong learning, which significantly changed the understanding of adult education. The shift was caused by factors such as: a new meaning of work, changed functions of knowledge, dysfunctions in mainstream formal education systems and training, and individualisation in post-industrial society. Under the new framework “(t)he key educational question is no

longer how certain material can be taught as successfully as possible, but which learning environments can best stimulate self-determined learning” (Alheit, 2018, p. 157). Still, the approach to lifelong learning in society doesn’t have that much influence on the exclusiveness of education and doesn’t fight for the eradication of inequalities related to the social and cultural capital of individuals (Alheit, 2009). The risk of exclusion and following only market-oriented standards, which guarantee employment, is high as the neoliberal system supports the mechanisms of economic valuation. As an alternative, Alheit proposed investment in social capital such as families, neighbours, co-workers, and citizens, where all people are lifelong learners, no matter their economic status or knowledge capacities. A biographical approach to the learning process (among many other perspectives), where each of us can act relatively independently, could secure a balance in the social framework. Biographical background knowledge creates preconditions to look for meaning in our lives, but also has the potential to change structures and power relations.

Having said that, the focus on the social aspect of learning is critical to this study, so in looking for a multidimensional understanding of the role of individuals, groups, and organisations, I am referring to the concept of a community of practice (Wenger, 2018). In his theory, Wenger claims that above all people are social beings and their way of participation in society is a central aspect of the learning process. The differentiation between “knowledge”, which comes from collecting data and information, and “knowing”, which is understood as participation and active engagement in the world, is an entry point to defining learning with four components: meaning, practice, community, and identity. All the components are connected to a sense of belonging to a group of people through experiencing the same things on the individual and collective level, doing things together, seeing the activity as meaningful and feeling part of the group. Wenger argues that people participate in many communities of practice on an everyday basis, but recognising the process, finding the vocabulary to describe the learning process which is an immanent part of each community, and reflecting on the learning process opens new areas of academic research. Still, the theoretical approach is important, but also practice seems to be promising to foster learning in groups, e.g., students, teachers, workers, managers, policy makers, or citizens (Ibidem). The theory of Wenger has been one of the most cited for the last decades and has been appropriated by market-oriented and neoliberal

organisations to justify professional development or in online and blended learning projects (Smith et al., 2017). “There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes “the practice of freedom”, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” – wrote Paulo Freire, the great thinker and critical pedagogue in “Pedagogy of the oppressed” (Freire, 2000, p. 34). At the root of critical pedagogy is critical theory and the Marxist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), which emphasises the absence of ideologically uncommitted knowledge, making any kind of education political (e.g. Freire, 2000).

The critical theory rooted in Marxist scholarship explains how and why people are able to live in a world founded on inequalities and full of power relations and dominant structures. “A critical approach to understanding adult learning sees it as comprising a number of crucial tasks such as learning how to perceive and challenge dominant ideology, unmask power, contest hegemony, overcome alienation, pursue liberation, reclaim reason, and practice democracy” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 2).

According to Stephen Brookfield, the well-known scholar in critical adult education, there are three main reasons why it is useful to combine critical theory with adult learning: 1) critical theory helps to explain the world by giving new meaning for processes, mechanisms and systems and naming or renaming parts of our experience to show a broader perspective of our existence as individuals and groups, 2) using critical theory catalyses social and political change and inspires action toward a new social order, which means that a critical approach to adult learning can contribute to creating a democratic, fair, just, compassionate, and engaged society by linking both theory and practice, 3) giving hope for changes yet to come, as in the concept of pedagogy of hope introduced by Freire and developed by many others (Freire, 2014; Giroux, 2021; hooks, 2003), and the world would be better place for all the people.

Based on the insights presented by Brookfield and Holst, the idea of radical adult learning, where Brookfield stressed that, in his view, “(a)dult learning is inextricably tied to creating and extending political and economic democracy - to equalizing control of and access to wealth, education, health care, and creative work, and to promoting collective and cooperative forms of decision making and labor.”

(Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 17). Considering the adult learning processes on a global scale, he emphasised the influence of globalisation on factors of learning such as how time and space have made the world smaller and have made it easier to access via technologies. Globalisation could be presented as a process of opportunities, but it was founded on the excessive power of multinational corporations over people, communities, institutions, and even states. Brookfield described the civil society perspective of globalisation as a space to challenge the corporate order and fight for civil space in society by creating new alliances and questioning the neoliberal status quo understood as global capitalism in the 21st century from the perspective of political economy. The idea of radicalism in adult education has a belief in the abolition of privilege and the creation of an equal society through learning process, where the idea of socialism could be a realisation of economic democracy focused on the common good. Brookfield also analysed the social, economic, and political polarisation in the United States and globally, which in, its destructive sense, pushes people to question the unfair and inhuman world order, where most people are on the margins of the system. The goal of radical adult education is connected to the radical social and economic reorganisation of society. In historical analysis, the researcher saw the great potential of a new social movement activism, like the Zapatistas, indigenous movements and landless movements in growing informal education and enabling radical social change, not in theory, but in practice.

In his analysis of democratic practice, Brookfield refers to Habermas's discourse theory of democracy and points out that adult education is an engine of social change because it is in adulthood that people embrace with critical reflection the norms and behaviours that, along with their ideological context, they assimilated in childhood (Brookfield, 2010). The theory of communicative actions, on which Habermas built his understanding of the democratic process, is enriched by Brookfield with insights into power relations in a society ruled by economic issues and defined through the lens of economic success, as well as a postmodern critique of logocentrism and the implicit meanings and connotations of words given the context of communication. For Brookfield, it is not the learning of democratic theory per se that is important here, but experiencing the contradictions, uncertainties and tensions in democracy, and learning to overcome them through procedures of deliberative decision-making (Ibidem). However, with the assumption that democracy is mainly a lifelong learning to exist in

contradictory, uncertain and random situations created largely by power relations with the hope of building democratic communication.

Recognising also the critics of the Neo-Marxist position, it is worth introducing Robin Usher, a contemporary theorist of learning, whose analysis of power relations were much in line with Foucault (Chomsky & Foucault, 2006; Foucault, 1998), seeing them in every aspect of life, not only between capitalists and workers. Usher's theory is mentioned here to emphasise the critical approach to the critical pedagogy itself, but also to recognize the opportunity for emancipation in experiential learning and practice. Usher presented a map of experiential learning in the social practices of postmodernity where he structured the process between Autonomy – Adaptation and Expression – Application, which result in different kinds of pedagogical practice (Usher, 2018).

One of the four dimensions stretched out between application and autonomy defined discursive critical practice, which is implicated by politics of representation in the social and cultural process. Critical practice is political, and experience is understood as knowledge and is directly linked with actions. Experiential learning challenges power relations by giving space and attention to voices, which have been unheard, to empower and transform them. Still, critical practice can simply become another norm, which has to be critically reflected and questioned. Describing the critical practice, Usher identified the role of postmodern social movements and the way they operated beyond totalising and theological narratives, and focused on personal and social transformation. Usher's description of critical practice (Usher & Edwards, 2007) is important to understand the perspective and background of social learning in my research project. In critical practice, learning is part of political and cultural practice. Usher defined adult learning based on criticism of consumerism and experience as a form of lifestyle where experience became another product to buy and a status symbol, which guarantees representation, power, and give control.

Usher also had a closer look at critical pedagogy through a postmodern lens, based on Giroux's concept of border pedagogy (Giroux & McLaren, 1994). The crisis of grand narratives and liberal democracy can elevate the concept of citizenship beyond the nation-state approach and recognise progress in the active participation of citizens, who became citizens in learning process through social formation. "In a sense therefore it can be said that the 'crisis' of the modern liberal state as reflected in its

failure to provide for all its citizens, in the decline of participation in elections and disillusionment with formal politics, brings forth critical pedagogy as one response, authoritarian populism as another” (Usher & Edwards, 2007, p. 2015). Critical pedagogy could be an attractive proposal for a postmodern world, but reflecting on Ellsworth (Ellsworth, 1997) and other contra-arguments, Usher suggested that critical pedagogy could be a project of emancipation adopting postmodern ideas and post-structural analyses and escaping from the trap of formal education and schooling to lifelong learning.

The pedagogical theories referred to above form the basis of my exploration, which has resulted in a focus on the concept of social learning (Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999, 2014), discussed in the next section. However, they are all necessary points of reference and illustrate my work with theories during the research project. Critical pedagogy and experiential learning resonate most in the analysis of the empirical material, but the broad context is provided by all the theories mentioned above. From the perspective of the researcher, it was important for me to show the process of finding the theory that became the axis of reflection, rather than simply sharing the end result of the research. Showing the broader theoretical context for this project is also a kind of argumentation for the decision I made.

2.1.2. Social learning focus

At the centre of the theoretical framework, the social learning concept has been situated to emphasise the role of social factors in learning as an informal process, which contributes to civic engagement in a changing world. The historical context of social learning is rooted in the theories of Albert Bandura, American psychologist, who defined social learning in the late 1970s. Bandura analysed three processes: imitation, observation, and modelling, and collectively called them “social learning” (Bandura, 1977). In his studies, Bandura defined imitation as copying someone else’s behaviour by simply repeating. By observations, Bandura meant taking the example of someone else’s behaviour, so seeing, analysing and doing the same in the same context. Finally, the modelling process meant that someone else’s performance is a kind of example for creating our own behaviour. His theory strongly influenced developments in cognitive psychology. Bandura’s theory was developed in a time of social change in America with the Civil Rights Movement and through famous leaders

like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, and also the Vietnam War and the Cold War, which were reflected in Bandura's work (Allan, 2017). One of the crucial characteristics of social learning, according to Bandura, is to assign the process with self-regulatory capacities by arranging environmental motivations and understanding the consequences of their acting to analyse, predict, and control people's behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

Following Bandura's theory of social learning, Kurantowicz translates it to adult learning perspective by questioning new forms of social integration (Kurantowicz, 2012). Her interest in the basic forms of social cohesion such as communities, groups, and societies, and the diversity of communities where people belong in postmodern society gave a new understanding of building social identity and the role of individuals in society. Demonstrating how diverse experiences of social learning are, Kurantowicz characterised it as dynamic, without sharp borders, flexible, and open for any forms and experiments which contribute to the awareness and presence of the individual in society. A close view of Bandura's theory and its role in the development of experiential learning theory can also be found in Jarvis (Jarvis, 2004). Although the development of social learning theory in adult education has moved away from Bandura's assumptions, it is nevertheless worth remembering the author of this concept.

The role of the social aspect of learning is still open for analysis from the adult education perspective and seems to be promising. Kurantowicz and Wildemeersch (Kurantowicz & Wildemeersch, 2011) reflected also on discourse on reviving community and the idea of random communities and groups with or without identity. The goal of the learning process in such defined communities isn't to build a common 'we' homogenous group, but to create conditions for interruptions between people, their opinions, and ways of being in the same space, or to create groups with diversity and imperfections.

The most comprehensive definition of social learning in strong relation to adult education and empirical research of social initiatives, actions, communities and groups, was developed by Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch et al., 1998), and my research project will follow his understanding. Social learning, according to Wildemeersch, was the theoretical response to the uncertain and unpredictable social situations in the last

decades of the 20th century (Wildemeersch, 1999). The framework was established to show that the learning process in groups, organisations, collectives, networks, and movements is not simply a sum of individual learning processes, but also integrates issues such as: problem solving, sociality, and social responsibility. Based on these factors, the understanding of social learning has been used in various research on activities and projects led by groups, which supported developing the framework in a real-life context.

Once describing social learning, it is important to see the process in the wider framework of a self-reflective society, as a part of participatory systems and to identify four main axes: action, reflection, communication, negotiation, and their dimensions. The idea starts with the needs and challenges faced by a group of people, who decide to take action to respond to them and make a change. Social learning is primarily connected to actions, which leads to the strengthening of competences and being active in the processes of society. On the other hand, we can think about the deficit of certain abilities. Competences are built through action, experience of interactions with individuals or collectives, and broader context. Wildemeersch defined these as participatory competencies (Ibidem, p. 43), where he also listed strategic (mobilising symbolic and material resources to reach their goals), normative (assessing actions, events and experience), and interpretative capabilities (articulate, giving meaning and symbolic conceptualisation).

The second dimension is reflexivity understood as a critical reflection questioning the validity and quality of actions, strategies, emotions, feelings, etc., and how they contributed to final outcomes. “The principle of critical reflexivity reflects this particular modern habit of examining conventions and outlooks in the light of their rational justification. And because it explicitly aims at the introduction of new information and the critical examination of unreflected assumptions, it contributes to the experience that such rationalisation are in need of permanent revision” (Ibidem, p. 45). Another form of reflexivity is an aesthetic one, expressed in new social movements and collectives based on the creation and innovation of common points of reference by symbols, stories, and routines to build joint narratives and create common feelings which are valued by the group. Reflection supports identification with the collective and its practice and legitimatises the group as an actor in reaching its social objectives. Diversity in perspectives, experience, and personal stories creates

differences in new opportunities in transforming the learning process and collective actions. Thus, the reflexivity is stretched out between belonging and distancing.

The third area of social learning is communication and its dimension between multilateral and unilateral control. According to Wildemeersch, unilateral control appears when there is focus on actions without time and space for questioning or sharing emotions in the group. This kind of control supports self-concealment and more defensive habits, not showing emotions or negative feelings, which is not open, reflective, or critical to mechanisms and patterns in the society. Multilateral control is an interaction pattern based on cooperative norms and a collaborative approach, also emphasising self-reflection on communication models and could be learned by individuals as a part of common values and skills. Worth mentioning is the lack of division between expert/professional in the field and dilettante or person only interested in the topic or involved in actions solving the issue, as rationalised knowledge is not the only one factor dominating communication. So, experts no longer have the have rights, power, or inalienable authority to communicate in the social field, as finding truth and solving problems are not reserved only for scientists and professionals. There are many other factors that can be recognised as essential, such as engagement, commitment to the issue, successful actions, and experience that support formulated opinions or proposed solutions.

Finally, the fourth dimension is negotiation, which is situated between dissent and consensus. Operating in a participatory system, which understands and encourages diversity as one of its value, negotiation seems to be an integral part of each interaction, which leads people to reach the same goals. Conflict is recognised by psychological researchers and theorists as one of the phases of group process (resource, group process), which always needs to happen and can contribute to the further development of both individuals and the collective.

Collaboration between members is one of the characteristics of movements and collectives. Of course, each has its specific rules sometimes driven by a specific goals, sometimes introduced openly to all members with some kind of contract. More and more groups are ready to face conflict and go toward it, rather than ignore or escape it, which is a kind of paradox of collaboration in the conflict between solving it internally, and having the tools and skills to support the process and on the sensitivity of other perspectives and to integrate them. The role of leaders is also crucial in such

a process to open the space and give legitimacy to all perspectives presented and expressed. The idea of social learning is to cope with contradictions and other points of view and to see it as strengthening the group rather than avoiding them. Remembering that there are different sources of dissent, negotiation presents a balance between conflict and consensus, which says a lot about the tensions and dynamics of groups and collectives involved in the process.

In the concept of social learning, Wildemeersch identified the role of individuals in the process, who have special tasks to fulfil. There are facilitators, obstructionists, go-between people, and core actors, but this depends on the situation and context, as each member of the group can act differently, so the roles are fluid and flexible. Overall, in the framework of social learning, Wildemeersch admits three other key basic issues complementary to the above-mentioned axes: creativity, power, and responsibility, which are depicted as a triangle with the central point of making social change/difference. Creativity in achieving goals even without important resources, such as money or bureaucratic competence, seems to be one of the key features of social movements and collectives. In various studies on social learning, Wildemeersch admits that most initiatives do not have enough resources to implement the expected change, but active positions and mixing resources have a positive influence and effect on their engagement. Creativity in social learning could be a game changer of the process in various aspects of finding new answers to identified challenges or new ways of opening new opportunities as a part of the process. Power is connected to agency and structure and could be limited by systemic dimensions. From the beginning, the power of each actor both as an individual and as a collective has to be acknowledged to reveal the social relationships and divisions of labour in society. More likely the power structure in systems is far from participatory in approach and are not supportive of social learning. Still, it is worth examining its influence on other aspects, such as communication, reflection, or negotiation. Discovering the dynamics of power relations and the multidimensional vectors of power as such can contribute to a deeper understanding that each person who participates in the process interconnects many roles (usually both oppressed and oppressor) depending on the directions and structures of power. Power relations are also part of negotiations from within the group and from the outside. As power relations are one of the key elements of critical pedagogy, it is worth returning to the political aspect of social learning. In this process,

the importance of the emancipatory approach is visible and valid, especially in the individual context, but also when speaking about mechanisms of power, inequalities, and exclusion. Values such as justice, fairness, and equality are the social basis for taking people out from their oppressed norms, frames, and meanings.

Finally, one of the outcomes of learning activities is social responsibility and sharing responsibility between members of a group, both inside and outside. The role of responsibility is not only a critical value to share but is also an active and adaptive position gained through interactions. The ethical factor shows the broader perspective of the limitations of our power and responsibilities in the global context of more just and fair relationships and a sustainable society and environment. All three aspects promise to build capacities for making social change. Going out from technical considerations of educational systems and focusing on making social difference is both critical and innovative to adult education.

A reflection on developing the concept of social learning was elaborated on by Wildemeersch from the historical perspective (Wildemeersch, 2013), indicating the crisis at the beginning of the 1980s in Western Europe and the introduction of a stronger neo-liberal agenda as an antidote to the situation while criticising the welfare state. The consequence of the crisis was also the decrease of interest in social learning and a doubting of the emancipatory approach of social pedagogy. Going beyond the formal education system, the former goals of adult learning and designed change to the informal process of learning were often inspired by grassroot movements and unforeseen actions and experiences in local communities. The theoretical framework that inspired Wildemeersch was a mix of practice, theory, and social science with the strong influence of critical pedagogy and emancipatory approach together with Anglo-American theories of change.

Both Wildemeersch and Biesta (Biesta et al., 2014) joined their academic forces by analysing the complexity of the relationship between democracy and education challenged by crisis or backlash against democracy as a system and democratic values such as freedom, equality, and solidarity. After more than 15 years of working with social learning, their reflection comments on the dynamics of globalisation and how it effects social, cultural, economic conditions, and evokes certain kinds of feelings such as insecurity, instability, ambivalence, which the process triggers. Wildemeersch took Biesta's reflection on citizenship (Wildemeersch, 2014),

democracy, and civic learning as an important stimulus, also taking on board Wenger and Latour's (Latour, 2005) perspectives to redefine his framework. The new definition of social learning is as follows: "the notion of 'social learning' both as a frame of reference for relevant research mainly in non-formal learning contexts and as an opportunity in real-life settings to (a) increase the reflective and reflexive capacities of individuals and collectives, (b) create conditions of democratic participation enabling a maximum mobilisation of capacities of different actors involved in transformation processes, (c) empower the group or the community in terms of increased cohesion and/or identify action and (d) strengthen the social fabric through increased participation in civil society." (Wildemeersch, 2014, p. 17)

The new approach to social learning stresses two dimensions of the concept: analytical and normative. The balance is important for both sides to have a theoretical dimension of experiential learning in communities and, at the same time, practice reaching the positive outcomes. After decades of individualism, society returns to building its strength and sense of belonging as a result of active participation in groups, which are somewhere in the middle between self-sufficiency and society. Civil society is understood here as part of social capital which creates a sense of belonging, solidarity, and responsibility, and is great capital for society at the national and global level. Establishing temporary communities of practice (using the analogy presented by Wenger's concept as described earlier) in groups, where people can contribute and feel safe among others to express their feelings and emotions is a first step toward creating collectives which are ready to cooperate with other groups and create networks for a common good. This is how the participatory practice of social learning takes place. At the same time, Wildemeersch was critical of communitarian perspectives and in contradiction presented liberal arguments, which valued individuals in democracy and diversity, or even divisions, that are visible thanks to a democratic system. He undermined the participatory characteristic of social learning after decades when many other co-governance techniques and equal participation opportunities had been developed. Social learning contributes much more to the situation, when people no longer have access to participation and want to reflect and rethink the system, questioning the rules and power relations hidden in the structure. So, the emancipatory potential is still in the concept, but much more so in the area of confrontation and exposing inequalities.

In the process of redefining the concept of social learning, another intellectual contribution is given by Latour (Latour, 2005) with his concepts of actor-network theory and solving problems in a diverse and divided society. The neo-pragmatic vision challenges the complexity of a global society and the limitations of democratic and critical tools to work with them on an everyday basis. Latour introduced object-oriented democracy and hybrid forums as a tool, where, similar to social learning, the role of experts and laypersons are vague and the opposition no longer exists and is not causing conflicts of power and influence. The central point of both ideas is how to learn and engage in the world of ambivalence, insecurity, and liquidity, and see it as a potential for building a new way of democratic practice with an understanding of diversity.

Biesta argues “that a democracy can actually only exist as a learning democracy” (Biesta, 2011), which means that the continuous learning process doesn’t belong only to the individual sphere, but contributes to the understanding of the public sphere. Taking into account Biesta’s reflection on the importance of lifelong learning in democracy, especially when it effects crisis or disagreements, shows the actual conditions of people’s citizenship and the translation of private problems to collective issues.

As Wildemeersch redefinition of social learning was inspired by Biesta’s reflection (Biesta et al., 2014), it is worth mentioning some concepts that were crucial to the development of his thinking. Conceptualising citizenship by encountering difference between social and political aspects is one of them and also by changing the former concept by grounding it in political narratives and making linkages to broader perspective of rules and state regulations. The social dimension of citizenship, according to Biesta, is looking for sameness, common values and perspectives, and equality and pro-social behaviours. The social aspect builds on similarities and shows people how important things are that we have in common and that we can share in society. From this perspective, differences are confused, and it is complicated to deal with contradictions inside the group, disagreement causes conflict. From a political perspective, the key value of citizenship is diversity and difference, which makes democracy stronger and more valuable. Understanding both aspects of citizenship goes beyond the definition of being a citizen, who has rights and duties in relation to the state, such as status, the right to vote, an obligation to pay taxes, social security, public

services, etc. It is much more in the sense of being active in public debate and actions and participating in decision-making processes if possible.

Citizenship is a fundamental concept for other definitions, such as civic learning, and creates political identity. Even Biesta argues that citizenship is mostly individualistic and overcoming it by learning about democracy could be the answer to showing the relationships between individuals, groups, and context (Biesta, 2011). Defining citizenship by Biesta and contextualising the concept by Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010a) in social learning, opens opportunities for this project to make connections between the learning process and one of its outcome, which is becoming a critical global citizen. The category of critical global citizenship will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

Biesta went further into his explanation of civic learning using distinctions between the concept of socialisation, where the process is for future citizenship, to being in transition or becoming a citizen as a goal, and the concept of subjectification where civic learning starts from current citizenship as a part of ongoing democracy. Biesta decided to use the term “civic learning” instead of “social learning” as he highlighted the political perspective of civic competences and asked critical questions about understanding citizenship in a democratic system (Biesta et al., 2014). Still, democracy seems to be a kind of order, where you are in or you are out, for or against, and that is why Biesta tends to define democracy in his educational projects. Inspired by Mouffe (Mouffe, 2000), democracy has to be opened for evolution towards more democratic mechanisms and solutions, but also opened to various perspectives on democracy and its perception. That’s why he explored not democracy itself, but experiments of democracy, which has a transformative approach from private problems to public issues. Private problems are individual, but public issues are related to collective experience and the idea of the common good. Going beyond individual and private goals and emphasising collective and public aspects of the learning process, Biesta strengthens the idea of political agency and a critical approach to citizenship.

2.2. New Social Movements

2.2.1. New Social Movements framework

Thinking about the world as a social construct, researchers and theorists view social movements as an integral part of sociology, because they are often perceived as groups which challenge authorities and the status quo, but also deliver solutions invented by citizens and people engaged in collective struggle. The sociological and political aspects of social movements situated this project close to sociology or even critical sociology. For critical sociology, social movements are a collective way to solve problems and analyse circumstances to be successful in their situation. Usually, social movements come into force when frustration in a society is high and people find a way to vent through resistance by acting for the collective struggle. Critical sociology has identified social movements as important from modernisation of political system to feudalism and to capitalism. Capitalist power and private good have scaled up inequalities and make them more visible, which has provoked people's resistance.

Social movements seem to be the voice of ordinary citizens, which have been heard many times in history, during bread riots, peasant uprisings, labour or suffragist movements, and many others. Modern social movements are defined by Buechler: "Modern social movements are self-conscious about constructing society. They are advocates for how society should be organized. They engage in deliberate efforts to promote a certain kind of future" (Buechler, 2014, p. 245). Democracy itself and democratisation of culture let social movements grow and inspire people to act together in non-formal groups. The idea of social movements is rooted in a critical paradigm where the goal is to change the world and society, not only to explain it as sociology tends to do.

Zygmunt Bauman defined sociology as an accomplishment of modernity by framing processes related to power, civilisation, control, culture, and socialisation (Bauman, 1992). To some extent, sociology is a framework, which gives sense to reality and all the chaotic and frustrating parts of modernity by giving it a structure. Bauman, in relation to Touraine's analysis, described social movements as social agents, which create themselves and are aware of their subjectivity and agency in the

social structure (Touraine, 1971). The agency of collectives escapes from normative national structures and goes beyond them.

The theory of new social movements describes the role of informal groups in post-industrial society as a response to their specific condition with respect to a tendency to isolation, fragmentation, and dehumanisation, built upon the heritage of old labour movements. Buechler characterised them as those which have postmaterialist goals, which are not directly linked to economic status, but where there is more recognition and participation of groups, which haven't been heard (Buechler, 2011). Postmodernity caused thoughtful changes in social constructions, functions, and organisations, so collective identity became flexible and changeable. This means that collective identity is based on events, joint activities, and common experiences to give all the participants the kind of acceptance and common recognitions about important problems or part of their individual identities, such as ethnicity, gender, race, sexual identity, or common values. By seeing connections between the goals of the collective and their private ones, the process of recognising a member of a group begins and the relation with the collective gets stronger. New social movements take care of symbols and communication inside and outside, so the dynamic aspect of the process of identification is intensified.

In addition, the historical context of the theory was established in France through a series of protests in 1968 by students, workers, and, finally, with a general strike. These anti-war, anti-capitalist, anti-imperial movements went into force during that time, and influenced young people in many other countries. Touraine stated that the student movement was the answer to economic growth simultaneously in European countries (Touraine, 1971). The claims of the protests were connected to political and social life in various aspects, such as the outdated educational policy at universities throughout the country, state and policy control in public spaces, exploitation of workers, imperial politics in Algeria, the traditional approach to social freedom, which meant that all social classes or groups were involved in different kinds of open protests, which ended up with a general strike in the whole country, which some opinionmakers called a civil war. The strong connection between European history and the theoretical framework has been discovered by Buechler, an American sociologist and expert, who also applied it to American and global contexts: "Poststructuralist, postmodernist, multicultural, anticolonial, feminist, and queer theorists all called attention to the

socially and politically constructed nature of diverse social identities, just as the movements associated with these labels challenged old identities and valorized new ones as part of these sociocultural struggles. The conjuncture of grand European theorizing, fundamental structural transformations, and novel collective action thereby inspired visionary work that has collectively come to be identified as new social movement theory.” (Buechler, 2011, p. 250).

Among the differences there are some characteristics of the new social movements by Buechler, that will be a great contribution to my empirical analysis. The first factor is recognising social movements as a separate formation, which acting in the context of disagreement, emergency, and/or crisis in collective way. The major differences were also connected with the postmodern perspective in sociology mentioned earlier in the text referring to Bauman (Bauman, 1976).

The second aspect is to establish the permanent link between times, system, and mechanisms in society that social movements respond to. Postmodernity, capitalism, market-orientation, bureaucratic and control state, instrumentalised relationships, rationalisation, and the scientific approach in social relations together with alienation are part of the catalogue of the contemporary state of societies around the world, so social movements play their role in the specific momentum of the development of society.

Thirdly, the social base of the movements are mostly values and grounded in beliefs. Although activists or members have to create common ground to collective actions and build enough social capital to understand why it is worth taking part, still the common space for cooperation and caring about issues is much broader than was identified before by class division. The ideological connection is one of the key aspects of collective actions.

The next feature, the fourth one, is recognising social issues as political. The politicisation of life and understanding how far the political system influences the ordinary lives of people is also connected to critical sociology and the development of technologies. The blurred line between private and public is often addressed as one of the aspects of postmodernity and living in a world full of technologies. Social movements often expose the relation and mechanisms of a political lifestyle and stigmatise violations in this area. The political aspect of action by movements is critical

also for the research project and is one of the key referencing points in the selection of criteria for the research in Poland.

The fifth characteristic is the kinds of values that social movements advocate for. The researcher (Buechler, 2011, 2014) argued that most of them are qualitative rather than quantitative and postmaterialist, and many of them also support democratisation and the autonomy of certain groups in society by granting full and equal rights. Movements are also distanced from taking power in a state or society, as the struggle is not directly linked with power or material goods.

The sixth attribute is organising movements in opposition to status quo mechanisms using cultural symbols and anticapitalistic strategies and being ready to explore new ideas and tactics. New social movements look for other forms of resistance in culture, symbols, and strategies.

Finally, in the seventh theme, distinguished by Buechler, is preferences in organizing structures of movements, which is non-hierarchical, democratic, participatory, and egalitarian. The structure is deeply rooted in the values and identity of each movement and is named as part of its DNA. Sometimes movements create or adopt structural proposals and carry out some kind of experiment inside the movement by proposing modifications to make sure that the structure fits their goals and values in activism.

Buechler (Buechler, 2011), discussing new social movements, identified two main theoretical types of new social movements: one is cultural and the other is political. The cultural type is based on the post-Marxist division between the past and present in social reality. It is focused on the creation of free spaces between society and the state, where the system dominates people's lives using administrative codes and mechanisms. Among many strategies, movements of this type use symbolic expressions and fight in the symbolic area of existence for diverse voices to be heard. In their opinion, going beyond political discourse could be more effective. The social base is built on values and ideological perspectives rather than any social class formations.

The political type is macro-oriented in general, and state-oriented in particular. Identified by some researchers as an answer to advanced capitalism. New social movements have engaged their forces to establish new constituencies in society based

on race, gender, nationality, or other characteristics, at the same time with class-based organisations and trade unions. Goals such as proactive, progressive, and antihegemonic change remain key to this type of collective organisation. Both types neglect the apolitical approach in social movements, which puts them both in a critical paradigm (Buechler, 2011). For this research, the second type is at the centre of my project.

2.2.2. New social movements in network society

In addition to many European theorists on new social movements, for the purpose of this research, I will follow Manuel Castells (Castells, 2010b) and his network society idea. The background of his theory is urban space and the transformation of society in capitalist dynamics of global markets and the lifestyle dictated by consumption model. Castells has followed social movements for decades and identifies mobilised and organised citizens from cities seeking collective consumption, political autonomy, and community culture. The Spanish researcher decided not to confront cultural and political types of movements, because he saw the potential combination of these two in urban movements. Due to this neo-Marxist theoretical approach, mixing types were easier to present. Still, the biggest shift in his work was a systemic theory on information society and the influence of the Internet on social and economic development on the global scale (Castells, 2004).

Castells' research about social movements between 2012-14 at the time of multiple crises around the world (such as Tunisia, Egypt – together with the Arab Spring, Spain and Occupy Wall Street) was crucial to describing new social movements, which work in parallel online and in reality (Castells, 2015). The network is understood as a wireless connection to the Internet, that is also creating an online space of autonomy to exchange, engage, and connect with other people around the cause looking for hope in collective actions. Being online together gave people the power to go out, usually in an urban space, and occupy it to make their own history by demonstrating their outrage. Networked social movements appeared in the public sphere for the first time during the Arab Spring, as social media were the only space of freedom and which motivated many people to fight against the dictatorship, gathering and demonstrating. In 2011, at Tahrir Square in Egypt, thousands of people gathered to demonstrate and gave a light of hope to other countries as it began an

uprising which forced Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt, to step down after 30 years and end his regime. Many social scientists have commented on the role of the Internet and social media during this phenomena, which has led others to further study the role of the Internet in the revolution. The increased trends of simultaneously acting in online and offline space by social movements has been observed both in Europe (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, the UK) and in the United States. Inspired by Occupy Wall Street in late 2011, the global movement protested under the common name, United for Global Change, and mobilised people in 82 countries claiming social justice and fighting for real democracy. The important historical context of the research is the global financial crisis in 2008, questioning global capitalism and its foundations, which caused a shrinking of the space of the welfare state and raised global inequalities between 1% of the richest and the rest of the world (Piketty, 2014). Castells highlighted the role of emotions such as fear, anger, danger, and anxiety, but also the enthusiasm released by the situation or event, that challenged people to react (Castells, 2010b). All these emotions are catalysts of social actions and social change, but they also highly stimulated communication between networks.

Network society is an idea established in the early 21st century that society is structured as a network powered by information and communication technologies. Networks are known as a series of interrelated nodes, which generate social structures and absorb information (Castells, 2004). The technological transformation of communication is the most important context of redefining new social movements. Even though the Internet itself is not a cause of social engagement, it is one of the key tools to use in mobilisation by connecting people and giving them space to freely share their emotions and indignation, feeling like a part of a group or community and organising through alternative actions or projects. The level of engagement depends on communication, where accessible, low-cost, and user-friendly channels are available, so it is easier to gather people around one issue. Online communication is large-scale, thus the mobilisation is broader than the local level, but also democratic and horizontal as to have access when you only need a device and a wireless connection. Digital networks help to build the connection between people, even if not directly, which is necessary to challenge domination and establish the collective in the struggle. Moreover, the Internet is not only a tool, but also social movements and cyberspace share common cultures of autonomy by establishing free, equal, inclusive,

and affirmative spaces to express thoughts, feelings, and future projects, which transforms people and confronts existing institutions and power relations (Castells, 2010a).

Based on his research, Castells presented a set of characteristics of new social movements organising themselves both online and offline (Castells, 2015). New social movements are characterised by multiple kinds of networks, which gave them a unique opportunity to create free spaces of collaboration on the Internet via social media, blogs, communicators, and also to structure the movement through relations between people and other movements or organisations. So, networks are a part of their identity, useful tools to communicate, but are also a part of their structure, which is flexible and easy to adapt to the changing environment. Networks cooperate with each other without a formulated and stable centre, which means that the power is always inside the structure, in-between and not concentrated in the hands of a leader (or leaders) or reinforcing flat structures. According to Castells, decentralised structure and multileadership makes them easy to access and democratic in a way of participation according to each member/ participant/ activist, increasing possibilities and the level of engagement. The networking structure also has great potential in answering challenges and reforming inside as long as there are enough people active on both sides of each link. “Networking as the movement’s way of life protects the movement both against its adversaries and against its own internal dangers of bureaucratization and manipulation” (Castells, 2015, p. 250).

New social movements have two identities: one online and the other offline. With offline strategies, these are visible in public, mostly urban spaces, through protests, demonstrations, or the occupation of urban spaces. They recognize that a movement has started, mostly online via social media or another communication loop, but the integral part of their identity is built in public spaces, mostly in urban spaces through actions, which demonstrates their emotions and resistance. Castells also argues that in-between there is another space of acting and creating, which he calls “space of autonomy” (Ibidem, p. 250). The autonomy is connected to the free and open space of communication in cyberspace, but also is a transformative push to challenge the status quo and reclaim public space for citizens. Using this perspective, new social movements also have a kind of spatial form in society. As we have already identified the spatial aspect of social movements, it is also important to distinguish how time is

defined. Many groups seem to operate in the here and now, especially on short-notice during actions on the street, and are mostly oriented to the future with their demands for social and political change. The time of their existence and influence is also important, as most of the initiatives aren't long-lasting, but activists create a kind of alternative time which Castells named "timeless time", and defined as a transhistorical form of time. The aspect of achronological existence is strictly connected to the spontaneity of performing triggered by public outrage or a specific event. Situations, photos of films published on the Internet, or testimonies of victims and marginalised groups, often are calls for action in public spaces, and also online. Catching the momentum, in relation to time, but also using it to mobilise people to act for or against something in the spirit of new social movements.

Another aspect, which defines them is operating both locally and globally at the same time. On one hand, activists organise the network locally, by occupying urban space in one city or country, but on the other hand, via the Internet they are connected globally. Many of the initiatives like Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street were immediately broadcast worldwide and many acts of solidarity or similar movements in other parts of the world appeared, taking their demands and catchwords as their banners. The relationship between the concepts of local and global will also be further elaborated in the next part of the chapter in relation to critical global citizenship. The global perspective is also important when speaking about virality. It refers to the tendency of new social movements performing online to create similar initiatives in different places in the world and in cyberspace.

Giving inspiration to and mobilizing to people power and building on the similarities of problems and resistance makes the actions viral and triggers hope for social and political change. Hope comes from the comparison between the discord happening outside the movement and the autonomy coming from the inside, the way activists are committed to the issue and how different processes such as decision-making or discussions are. Usually in new social movements we have observed assemblies making decisions in a deliberative manner without selected leaders, where power is delegated to the collective based on some defined and agreed rules. The lack of trust in officials and decision-makers who rule the world is a reflection of privilege and power relations, but also network structures makes leadership much more complicated in new social movements.

Movements often decide to practice a more participatory approach, where activists won't reproduce the power relations from the world that they wish to change. The deliberative method also requires time, so at the same time networks are operating both in an online and offline manner, activists are engaged and creating a feeling of togetherness. "Togetherness is not community because community implies a set of common values, and this is a work in progress in the movement, since most people come to the movement with their own motivations and goals, setting out to discover potential commonality in the practice of the movement. Thus, community is a goal to achieve, but togetherness is a starting point and the source of empowerment" (Ibidem, p. 253). Closeness generates trust which is in contradiction to the cynical and competitive approach of politicians, so participation in a movement has a different meaning than in a political party. Movements are also self-reflective both on the individual and collective level in relation to values, approaches, goals, and mechanisms, which is highly visible both in the way activists communicate and in how many places (online and offline), and also how they use inclusive and sensitive language to communicate inside the network.

All new social movements declared non-violent actions and linked their actions to participatory democracy, civil rights, and civil disobedience. Still, they are far away from political games, but out pressure from the outside through strategies, which are annoying, shocking, and challenging for both decision-makers and sometimes everyday people. Police and other institutions which violated their right to protest often brought them even more support from society and made them visible and heard by many people and encouraged others to join.

New social movements don't create and publish program documents or strategies, but their demands are clear and formulated in a simple way for the general public. Due to the deliberative method of decision-making, the movement's goals can change depending on motivations and the focus of activists. The goals of many social movements are quite general without a specific roadmap as to how to achieve the change or analysis of various circumstances. On one hand, it could be considered an advantage that they are flexible enough and open to urgent and timely issues. On the other hand, it is a disadvantage as there is no immediate receipt as to how to make the expected change. Social movements often get to the point where they have to face the fact that solutions have to be framed and precise, like amendments to the law, or

constructive critique based on analysis and budgeted. That's why they mostly speak about values and push certain sets of values, but they are not ready to take over state institutions and look for pragmatic solutions within an existing system of power or creating their own political party. However, new social movements are political in the sense of ideological idealism and build a vision of the future as a utopian project. They challenge the political agenda with their demands, and they found movements on deliberative and networked democracies. As Castells sums up: "(w)hat these networked social movements are proposing in their practice is a new utopia at the heart of the culture of the network society: the utopia of the autonomy of the subject vis-à-vis the institutions of society. Indeed, when societies fail in managing their structural crises by the existing institutions, change can only take place out of the system by a transformation of power relations that starts in people's minds and develops in the form of the networks built by the projects of new actors constituting themselves as the subjects of the new history in the making" (Ibidem, p. 256).

2.2.3. Critical approach to social movements

A new understanding of social movements was also inspired by Marxist analyses of classes as social formations and building collective identity. In this research, I will follow Cox and Nilsen's critique of neoliberalism on the global scale and show the role of Marxism while speaking about social movements (Cox & Nilsen, 2014). Both researchers emphasised that Marxism is the theoretical and ideological framework, which is not only descriptive, but focused on changing the power structure. It is rooted in the experience of marginalised society groups, such as women, workers, sexual and ethnical minorities, and indigenous groups, who didn't have rights and the space to make their voices heard. People's needs have to be addressed, and their importance has to be recognised by the majority. Cox elaborated more about this from the social perspective: "our kinds of society – based on divisions of class, of gender and sexuality, of race and ethnicity, with states and cultures that support these divisions – are only really interested in a narrow subset of human needs. Hence, even what is offered to 'successful' people is often very short on some of the things that we might feel make life most worthwhile – free time, for example, real human community, a wide natural world within which to wander freely, social equality, a deeper sense of

meaning, participation in the decisions that affect us or even the ability to live well without feeling that other people are suffering and dying elsewhere for our benefit” (Cox, 2018, p. 24). This emancipatory approach is understood even more broadly, not only from the perspective of individuals or social class, but as having a great contribution to contest global capitalism and social inequalities.

Both Cox and Nilsen recognised the importance of activists’ knowledge and the role of social movements in their theoretical practice, which they called “activist theorising” (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p. 5). Non-dogmatic Marxism is a way to define what politics is by understanding the rules, structures, and mechanisms of power and looking for opportunities to act as activists.

As with Castells, these researchers emphasised the geopolitical context of the development of new social movements. Highlighting the war against terrorism, which started on September 11, 11· 2001, the escalation of global economic inequalities and the growing influence of global capitalism through the World Trade Organisation in the economic sphere (alterglobalists’ protest in Seattle in 1999), the financial crisis in 2008 (both in America and Europe [Greece, Portugal, Spain, Cyprus, Ireland, etc.]), and many others situations, which contributed to the increasing criticism of the neoliberal agenda and manifested outrage (Piketty, 2014). Researchers (Cox & Nilsen, 2014) explored the relationship between the theory and practice of social movements, which was inspiring from the perspective of this research project, where Cox & Nilsen (Ibidem) rethink both Marxism and social movements research. Cox & Nilsen elaborated on the role of theory from the activists’ point of view, which was refreshing as putting social movements and activists in the centre of the research recognises them as changemakers of many social changes in the neoliberal paradigm. Asking questions on why activists need theory, the answer is multidimensional, but at first emphasises the role of learning in becoming an activist as a person who has realised that the world is unfair and won’t be fixed by the system, as the damage is part of it. The learning process is both individual and collective in the sense of creating solidarity in contradiction and resistance to the existing power structure. Following this starting point, Cox and Nilsen (Cox & Nilsen, 2014) asked three other questions: 1) What should we do? 2) How will the system react? and 3) What will work and how we can win?

The moment when the individual realises that the world is driven by power relations which disempower himself/herself/itself is a key situation to becoming an activist and to be encouraged to change something. This experience is active and describes not only what happens, but what people can do to try to respond to a situation or event. Experience is part of the learning process, which starts when people experience the world themselves and understand it, and contribute to practical knowledge about the world and interactions with other human beings. Experience makes people aware of their place and role in society and the world, but also directs them to reflect more on existential issues. For Cox and Nilsen, theory is knowledge made out from experience and development is possible thanks to a new one, which is why social movements are important by their practice and engagement to build ground for social theories. It is essential when thinking about Marxist theory the agency of social movements which is in opposition to institutions in power and openly struggles with them using radical strategies. For decades, many social movements built their theoretical background on leftist theories, including Marx and Engels, as it showed how to build a common cause and radicalising critique of the status quo and how to identify the strategy of the social elite to maintain the existing system without any changes.

2.2.4. Global context

When thinking about social change it is essential to keep in mind two main contradictions, expanding freedoms and rising inequalities, both of which contribute a lot to the context of the social movement on the global scale. Schaeffer argued that equalities and inequalities develop in modern society simultaneously and jointly influence social relations (Schaeffer, 2014). One of the key characteristics of social movements is the number of people that they gather around the cause that they stand for. Movements are collective bodies, and their actions are mostly analysed from the collective perspective and groups behaviours. Still, one should note that individual contributions to the collective struggle as movements attracted various and diverse people to join them. According to Schaeffer, individuals, social networks, organisations, and political parties support global social change using wide-ranging actions (mass demonstrations, hunger strikes, riots, violence, but also litigation,

advocacy, etc.) and forms of organising and mobilising people. For my research project, the collective perspective is much more inspiring, but the role of individuals' contributions to the group will be also taken into account in the empirical part of the work.

Based on his historical analyses, Schaeffer presented three types of social movements, which influence global changes: aspiring social movements advanced change, altruistic movements assisted change, and restrictionist movements resisted change. The typology is interesting from the perspective of defining global social change and how movements themselves change in their struggle and engagement, especially when they tested horizontal structures, democratic participation, and new mechanisms of decision making, etc. Many scholars (McAdam et al., 2012; Staggenborg, 1991) hesitated to analyse both social movements and global change as the outcome of the work of social movements seems to be vague and is not easy to distinguish in the social and historical context. The optimistic approach of Schaeffer to global change recognizes its complexity and understands that outcomes could be perceived only in the long-term perspective and when contextualised. He concludes: "If one takes a long view, there is considerable evidence that social movements have transformed social relations and produced a rising tide of global social change. Of course, change, like the tide, advances and retreats. But just as global warming, which is a product of human agency, has lifted the seas, social movements have raised the waterline and lifted the sands, so we now stand, between waves, on higher ground" (Schaeffer, 2014, p. 221).

Social movements are described all over the world as key actors in many local, national, and global contexts. Describing social problems, many researchers proposed solutions that were designed in collaboration with grassroots organisations and social movements as a voice of people, who reclaimed their power. Choudry and Kappor (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010) discussed knowledge production in social movements from the global perspective, and argued that people and movements engaged in social change have many things to share such as their voices, ideas, perspectives, and theories, but that they usually do not have space to be heard or their experience is overwritten by scholars and experts. Both editors valued the intellectual contribution of activism and recognised informal and collective intelligence in shaping theoretical framework of learning, change, and social networks.

On the meta-level, they raised an important question about the relationship between social movements around the world and academics by following Griff Foley (G. Foley, 1999) and his cautions about all forms of learning in social actions, which are underestimated in the scientific world. Social change is mostly about transforming relations from the perspective of power, but the research and theory are elitist and isolated in academia and in many cases support the status quo and are counter-effective to social change. Introducing a collection of case studies from movements all over the world, including from Canada, Colombia, Taiwan, and South Africa, researchers responded to the dilemma advocated for global collectives, their wisdom and continuous struggle, but also underlined their personal engagement in social change through participation in organisations and movements.

Vaden, Funke & Prevost presented global social movements from the global perspective in the second decade of the 21st century (Vaden et al., 2017). They described how the geopolitical situation was intensified by the examples of Black Lives Matters in the US and globally, such as with Occupy in Hong Kong, the Zapatistas in Mexico, indigenous groups in the Andes Mountains in Bolivia, Colombia, Chile and Peru, and finally through the Global Social Justice Movement. Researchers collected case studies of social movements from around the world, which were engaged in social and political change, and formulated the idea of a new epoch of contention. Defining the epoch, they emphasised the logic of social movements, which is dynamic, highly contextual, and radical participatory democracy through references to the rhizomatic structure inspired by Deleuze and Guattari in “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2009). Funke perceived social movements in their multiplicity, decentralised structure, and horizontal forms of organising without leaders or centres and without a coherent and stable strategy, but with great communication tools, a radical democratic approach, multidimensionality, and diversity in political struggle. Movements are identified mostly as leftist with a historical background on social needs and a contradiction to neoliberal capitalism, but also recognize the perspective of bridging between various movements and groups using communication and organising social relations online and offline. The main idea coming out of Vaden, Funke and Prevost is that leftist social movements challenge representative, neoliberal democracy, which is a global phenomenon as all of them have created diverse, but coherent, global meta-movements focused on deeper

democratization. Each movement is bound by time, place, and cause, but all of them highlight the non-violent character and have one purpose: to overcome the current structures and rules, and to introduce a new political order.

2.2.5. Polish context

In diagnosing civil society in Poland and other post-communist countries, Ekiert and others (Ekiert & Foa, 2011) identified the lost chances of the democratic revolution in 1989 driven by elites and a neoliberal agenda. For generations, Polish citizens grew up in communism, where people were encouraged to join the one and only mass organisation of these times – the state-party, which controlled all areas of their lives from work to leisure. After the transformation, which was initiated by civic opposition, informal organisations, and trade unions, researchers noticed “civic demobilisation” instead of a renaissance of grassroots initiatives. In 2015, Poland was one of the most stable and successful countries in Europe from an economic, social, and political point of view, with a well-functioning state and strong civil society (Ekiert et al., 2017). For many scholars, an active civil society contributed to the quality of Polish democracy in these times. According to Ekiert, there are four processes that supported this development of civil society: reconstitution and recombination, de-etatisation, de-corporatization, and professionalisation. All of these showed that the development of civil society is interconnected with other actors in the public sphere (especially relations with the state) and is also determined by the history of the society (here, a mostly democratic transformation).

If a factor of civic engagement is the number of different types of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Polish rate seems to be promising. From a report on Klon/Jawor in 2018, there were 117,000 associations registered and 26,000 foundations registered. Almost 70% of them had less than 15 years of experience, and so were established at the beginning of the 21st century, and notably the increase occurred after the accession of Poland to the European Union.

Speaking about the quality of Polish civil society, research by Chimiak analysed solidarity work in NGOs and other forms of civic engagement and the individualistic approach of people at the beginning of 21st century (Chimiak, 2006).

Chmiak concluded that the Third sector (as the civic sector is called) became the egalitarian public space through the phenomenon of learning-by-doing and action-learning, which provided opportunities for all participants to develop their skills and awareness of social issues by broadening their perspective. Activists with higher social capital, internalised values, and frameworks more easily identified themselves as activists and were inspired by many personal (self-interest), ideological (power relations), and functional reasons. Involvement in NGOs is perceived as an alternative to membership in a political party, which have a poor reputation in Polish society as being ineffective and self-interested. Participation in civil society gave individuals a feeling of contribution to a common cause and fulfilling their personal needs and enriching their professional lives in a place devoted to specific values, not only profit making. The typology of activists developed by Chmiak in these studies led her to a general conclusion about the self-generating potential of institutionalised civic initiatives taking place in NGOs and beyond (Vergara Polanska & Chmiak, 2016). Still, the research has an individualistic approach and could be an starting point for studies on social activism and also widening the perspective on social movements, not only NGOs.

Coming back to new social movements in Poland, I refer to Polish sociologist Tadeusz Paleczny, who analysed both the theoretical and the practical approach of the framework (Paleczny, 2010). The idea of new social movements isn't so popular in Poland, but a lot has been written and said about civic and social movements from the historical perspective of the Solidarity movement and also the anti-communist opposition movement before 1989. In addition, the theoretical approach to social movements of Sztompka from the sociological structuralist standpoint addressed many concepts related to social activities (Sztompka, 1987). Almost 20 years later, Paleczny refers to the new social movement framework and identifies the typology of movements using five criteria: historical, cultural, political, economic and structural, and ideological (Paleczny, 2010). Paleczny describes political groups as those who want to influence democratic rules and power relations and make them fair, just, and transparent in an evolutionary way. Among economic movements, he also identified alterglobal groups in Poland such as anarchists, social justice movements (related with residents movement), urban activists, and all the groups who are disadvantaged by existing economic power relations and global inequalities. Although Paleczny

analysed the new social movements framework from a theoretical and historical point of view, his typologies of movements and their members and leaders has a mostly descriptive approach to understanding the role of social movements in society as such.

The same approach in work on social movements has been presented by other Polish researchers such as Mandes (Mandes, 2007). Even if he doubted in the relevance of new social movement categories, he referred to four important elements of social movements that would be useful in this research project: diverse and informal network, common values and internal solidarity, conflicting with status quo, protest and demonstrations as tool, and strategy of acting for social change. Based on this, Mandes formulated a definition of social movements as “a collective action aiming at causing or stopping social change, carried out by a group forming a network built on a set of shared values and identities. The main means of a movement is protest and appealing to public opinion in order to gain public support for its goals” (Ibidem, p. 8) and emphasised the difference between political parties and non-governmental organisations. Analysing the historical aspect, Mandes concluded that goals are important for these groups, but processes of reaching them also influences the public sphere, where the topic and ideas are more visible and better understood even if they are perceived as a disappointment.

2.3. Critical Global Citizenship

2.3.1. Notion of global citizenship

According to Bauman, society as a national state was constructed in modern sociology: “most sociologists of the era of modern orthodoxy believed that—all being said—the nation state is close enough to its own postulate of sovereignty to validate the use of its theoretical expression—the ‘society’ concept—as an adequate framework for sociological analysis” (Bauman, 1992, p. 57). Postmodern reality changed the dimension of society to a more global and interconnected one, following this observation the idea of citizenship has been reworked and confronted.

Wildemeersch, mentioned earlier in the context of social learning theory, also gave his input on how to understand active citizenship from the perspective of community building (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010a). Following other researchers, he strengthened the understanding of “citizenship as status” and “as

practice” (Ibidem, p. 491). Citizenship as practice is a dynamic concept related to taking actions and attitude towards democratic participation in society and could be linked to more a radical and critical understanding of democratic system. European policies have linked active citizenship with a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes grounded in the structural privilege of civic, social, and political rights, but the concept of practice is more flexible and ambiguous. The inclusion of all citizens and their autonomy are crucial in this approach but looking beyond the European perspective is rather impossible due to the power relations structure. For the researcher, who went further by questioning the European society concept, following Bauman thoughts (Bauman, 1992), on active citizenship idea and emphasising tensions and dilemmas of policy and practice. The answer explored is an idea of democratic citizenship and its critical approach to the existing social order and power relation in contrast to social inclusion. The political approach of the concept is clear, even if modern society is based on rational scientific and technological principles. For Wildemeersch, both active and democratic approaches to citizenship are focused on the individual aspects and interest of each person, who is integrated with society, which narrows down the idea to function and takes advantage of individual capacities. Looking for the aspect of identity and capacities which support not only individuals, but all society seems to be critical in his notion of citizenship.

Before I will address the critical global citizenship precisely, first I am going to refer to the idea of citizenship itself after O’Byrne and his distinguishing critical-theoretical approach to globalisation (O’Byrne, 2003). According to O’Byrne, citizenship can be defined as a form of political identity, where political means establishing and developing political awareness and being committed to some values and morality. Political identity isn’t related to any form of state or system of governance and opening discursive ideas of citizenship based on a sense of belonging and integration into the political system. Four components of citizenship have been detected: membership, rights, duties, and participation. Still, the discussion on the territorial aspect of the idea is vibrant, as membership to a group of people was connected with place, region, and/or country during modern times. Being a citizen is also ennobling and gives opportunities for active participation. O’Byrne argued that the identification of citizens is part of group identification and active participation in their development in the public sphere. Your duties and rights as a citizen are an

integral part of your awareness, not only allocated by the law. In the end, your consciousness and acting for the collective interest of your society leads the whole group to the idea of civil society (Ibidem, p.1-9)

Global citizenship is considered by modern sociologists as a kind of oxymoron in a society based on the national-state system. Globalisation is a process of massively increased trade and cultural interrelations and escalated interdependencies between people all over the world. For O’Byrne, global citizenship is as a practical and political concept refers to world citizenship influenced both positively and negatively by globalisation and is rooted in discursive and intersubjective democracy, but also with a strong performative aspect. Exploring sociological and philosophical theories such as contractarian, communitarian, and performativity of citizenship, the researcher finalised his attempt of framing global citizenship with a pragmatic approach. He formulated the idea in 13 interconnected statements, which is a kind of theoretical manifesto conceptualised on Habermas’ theory of communicative rationality. Among the points worth highlighting are: human rights in its universal understanding are grounded in world law and can only be protected by global structure; peace, human rights, and discursive democracy with the free exchange of information and knowledge between individuals and access to it can only be achieved through global citizenship; the sovereignty and empowerment of people needs to be done on both the local and global level – called active globalisation-from-below; a rethinking of the system and lifeworld and acting resistance to the political and economic order could work only on the global scale; finally, globalization-from-below can take place because global concerns will threaten people more than even before and the consciousness of the world as a whole will be present to face them.

2.3.2. Critical perspective in global citizenship

The critical global citizenship taking citizenship out from the nation-state context and seeing it more in the global North and South perspective, seeing the concept as an active, political, and powerful framework challenging the global status quo and valuing diversity by maintaining cultural identities and practices. This critical awareness of the global situation promotes a willingness to resist social injustice and an ethical responsibility to act for the common good locally, nationally, and globally. It is a recognition of not only our increasing global interconnectedness, but also the

need for grassroots activism to address societal and global injustices and to remove impediments to justice based on spatial/geographic limitations: “Such a critical global citizenship can be approached at the level of a continuum ranging from knowledge-based processes (including critical understanding and self-awareness) and value orientation (personal commitment to egalitarian values and global ethics) to political and committed activism (willingness to challenge attitudes and behaviours within different societal milieus)” (Mansouri et al., 2017, p. 4).

Referring to the division between soft and critical global citizenship education (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014) problems at the centre for potential global citizenship are the inequality and injustice of the world, seeing the privilege of groups, who benefit from the power relations and control the oppressive system. Responsibility and accountability towards others provide political and ethical grounds for acting against an unjust system and becoming global citizens, by understanding the need to change the existing world. The interdependencies that show the connection between local and global as asymmetrical and consolidate unfair power relations and no longer unite the people in an equal sense by the same opportunities and aspirations. Under this theoretical framework, Andreotti claimed that the system creates unfair mechanisms, institutions, and relationships and it needs to be changed to make the world more just and fair. The role of individuals and their consumer choices is rather weak, and they have to analyse their position and privilege to participate in changing structures, assumptions, and attitudes, so it means that individuals are part of the problem and at the same time can support or co-create solutions. Still, no longer only individuals can bring about the change, but the collective effort can make change from the inside out.

2.3.3. Global citizenship in civil society organisations and social movements

In his handbook on global education, Le Bourdon argued that informal space provided a great opportunity for a deeper learning process on global issues where emotions and experience can be easily shared as the interactions and connections between people are less formal and build on trust, curiosity, and sympathy (Le Bourdon, 2020). Looking at the conceptual framework of global citizenship education, she admitted that it is rather more a personal lifelong learning process than a formalised and structured curriculum with a set of skills and practice to be fulfilled and implemented. The role of civil society organizations and social movements has to be

recognized as crucial to learning processes understood as exchanging knowledge and skills between activists and learning to negotiate with decision makers. The specific construction of social movement learning could be one of the most important factors describing the adult education processes in activism. The main knowledge and skills learnt by the process are structural power issues, an understanding of their place in the world, interpersonal communication and group skills, and general societal and cultural learning (Underhill, 2016).

Based on the implementation of development education at the European Union level, the question about the future of global issues such as justice and sustainability have been raised by Troll and Krause (Troll & Krause, 2016). Their research highlights the systemic approach of the sustainability in a range of areas in the global economic, political and ecological spheres. As the potential of both civil society organisations and social movements towards global systemic change has been identified, the typology of a global citizens movement has been presented (Ibidem). The three conceptual types/tendencies of a global citizens movement are: connecting local power struggles (type A), global thinking & global regime change (type B), and radical new humanity (type C).

Under type A, connecting local power struggles is rooted in local activism, grassroots movements, and niche struggles with strong bottom-up approaches to the decision-making level (both national and global). Under type B, global thinking and global regime change is established on the local level, but the contribution to the changes on a global policy level (in the area of culture, language, discourse, and views) and the visibility in the worldwide movement are significant. Under type C, radical new humanity is the most radical proposal of rejecting policy work and focusing beyond the political power relations struggle and to construct alternative global narratives. Troll and Krause argue that development education stakeholders (especially non-governmental organizations and their activists) have both experience in global thinking and identifying interlinkages between global issues and local realities as well as critical reflections on them, but also skills and resources to offer the support of the transformative learning and exchange process of a global movement. Therefore, what “development education has to offer is deep learning processes in which individuals and groups undergo life-changing processes of personal transformation, which open space for truly new vision to emerge” (Ibidem, p. 153).

Coming back to the aforementioned O'Byrne and his theoretical framework of global citizenship, it is worth noting his reference to social movements (O'Byrne, 2003). He advocates for rethinking the foundation of society and the agency of global change based on the rules of radical democracy. Based on the organisational practice of movements such as Amnesty International and the World Government of World Citizens, who present the collective will and values, global citizens are aware of the possibility of political participation different than from the political parties. Following this idea of radical democracy, people express their values and important issues through social movements, where different strategies and tactics are implemented to make social change possible on the global scale. The only question that remains is how to make social movements strong and numerous enough to tip the scales of social change.

2.3.4. Global citizenship in activism

The global context of the defined way of making activism such as challenging the neoliberal system, shortcutting supply chains, predicting climate crisis, an active learning process, and political engagement, are some of the aspects of critical and active participation in society, something that can put on the agenda the way of understanding democracy and citizenship in an alternative and progressive way and on the global scale, but also find a way to create and to construct something new inside or outside the system was the key to long-term engagement and changing the interlocutors' attitudes. The shift between learning global and becoming a global citizen by acting in global causes as an activist makes a major difference in understanding and enlarging the educational context. Proposed by Curley, Rhee, Subedi and Subreenduth (Curley et al., 2018), the framework of activism which is focused on unlearning processes in practice to change the power dynamics starting with individuals and on the small scale to inspire than collectives to unlearn their neo-colonial frames and habits, especially tracing power relations in understanding what nation is and how we overcome nation-thinking (Spivak, 2012). The idea is a challenging voice in the debate about citizenship to deconstruct the tensions between local-national-global, with all the habits and privileges hidden under these concepts. Curley and others emphasised that activism within global citizenship is possible when activists are focused on the transnational situation of human rights abuses (without straight geographical context), against the State and the current system. Using the

example of the Black Live Matters movement, the authors show how to analyse non-formal or in-formal learning in activism from the unlearning perspective.

Three models of activism can be identified: deficit model, relativist–pluralist–neoliberal multiculturalist model, and decolonising pedagogy taking into account their limits (Curley et al., 2018). These three models are relevant to illustrate how activists from social movements can work as collectives with the idea of critical global citizenship and how their goals and organising structure can change the system by allowing people to unlearn and challenge their habits and to co-create activities based on a new model of thinking and learning. In the research, the framework will confront the idea of the social movement and learning activism to create a deeper understanding of how social movements could overcome systemic power relations and create alternative thinking and acting committed to critical global citizenship among activists.

The deficit model is based on a humanitarian approach to development and otherness, not being reflected on privilege and power relations. Acting more in a process of identifying problems and looking for solutions which can help, liberate, civilise, and save some unidentified others. There is also a clear division between Global North and South, developed and underdeveloped, civilised and uncivilised and the way to get better is to follow Global North, Western, neoliberal, free market, economic developments all over the world as the universal answer. The relativist-pluralist-neoliberal multiculturalist model understands that there are many perspectives to consider and approaches to solve problems, so only one answer is no longer possible. Still, by not analysing and reflecting upon individual standpoints with their privilege and power, some of the solutions and mechanisms are replicated—sometimes even unintentionally—in the process. Though there is a move toward inclusion by affirmation that all people are different, the same is not enough to deconstruct the existing, systemic, and historical power relations. Under this model, authors recognise global citizenship as a neoliberal racial project, where individuals as consumers and nations as markets have the right to exploit in order to benefit the individual freedoms of privileged groups. The decolonising pedagogy shows the historical context of power relations and its influence on the status quo. The model is committed to engagement in the areas of politics, history, culture, and citizenship to explore them and overcome the tensions between the local, national, and global, and to make an effort to deconstruct and unlearn what was given by the system and formal

education to individuals and collectives, by crossing ideas, structures, stories, and disciplines (Curley et al., 2018). A critical approach to the learning process is close to the critical global citizenship approach also mentioned by Andreotti and Souza (2008), and the methods inspired by the un-learning process, where many people's habits and beliefs are deconstructed and challenged in safe, dialogical, usually nonformal, space

2.4. Learning activism

Coming back to the reflection on activism as a form of learning, Azis Choudry and his idea of learning activism should be mentioned (Choudry, 2015). Encouraged by Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, Choudry illustrated the dynamics of informal learning in social actions for social justice as a kind of laboratory, where innovative ways of sharing knowledge and skills happened. The process of knowledge production and exchange experienced takes place in campaigns and mobilisation in social movements. The theory is based on his own activist experience where he noted many tensions between the notion of expertise and professional forms of learning related to the institutionalisation of non-governmental organisations and also the struggles with state politics or even oppressions. Following theories such as Foley's (G. Foley, 1999) and Holst's (Brookfield & Holst, 2011), he understood the relationship between social change and learning as a dialectical process. Theories can contribute to the development of social movements through analysis and critical reflections, but also movements can produce theories within the group of members/participants, which will be validated as a theoretical concept. The same with power relations between teacher and learner, when at the same time they support each other in their capacity building and sharing, rotating roles and also decreasing the distance between them. One of the examples of this movement provided by Choudry described a case study of Via Campesina (sisterly movement to Nyleni). "The experience of people coming together through powerful popular education activities—sharing moments of opening and sensing alternative ways of doing things, valuing their own roles in producing ideas together—is something difficult to replicate through formal education and curricula. Building the determination and confidence in ordinary people that they can organize to bring about change is crucial" (Choudry, 2015, p. 90). He also saw the tensions between formal and informal education and how it influenced the value of the learning process, but also access to knowledge and power relations in the Global South, where

education is a symbol of status and strengthens mechanisms that make inequalities stronger and longlasting.

Seeing also the influence of capitalist forms of learning, such as conferences, panel discussions, debates, and workshops doesn't build a movement that is primarily learning from the struggle. Choudry also suggested that it would be effective only when it worked on an emotional level. As one of the important methods which reflects on power relations, he presented the Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal (Boal, 2008), with the clear goal of the emancipation and self-empowerment of the actors/participants. Similarly, to educate for social change all forms of interactions are welcome, such as music, the arts, humour/comedy, and performance. The study of social movements showed that groups used different kinds of learning processes, sometimes designed and formalised (ways of communication, wording, participation in trainings, and events, etc.), but along with this process many unintentional and incidental learning took place, even related to critical reflection on the proposed formalised forms or interactions between people with different backgrounds. "There is a kind of learning that happens in encounters between groups and movements—how people learn to frame and reframe their stories in sharing their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives with others outside of their circles or networks. We see this in coalition-building contexts, campaign work, and at forums bringing different groups and movements together, whether or not education or learning is "officially" on the agenda" (Choudry, 2015, p. 102). For theorists and activists, these are contemporary realisations of popular education by Freire with many contradictions and tensions such as national state security, neoliberal influences, and notions of expertise in global social justice movements.

Chapter 3: Data Analysis

This part of the thesis is based on the analysis of all the research material (including 15 narrative interviews, analysis of external and internal communication channels of each movement, participant observation of the researcher during events, and activities undertaken by each movement, described in detail in the chapter on methodology) compared to the theoretical framework adopted. The results of the analyses are presented in the identified research areas, but they are far from comparing or classifying the selected movements in relation to each other, which stems from the idea of the study, which is a critical reflection that seeks to strengthen social movements rather than to juxtapose or valorise them.

The main piece of the chapter consists of four separate parts. Part one, on the holistic educational approach in the selected social movements, describes the aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as key components of social learning (Biesta et al., 2014; Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999) and learning activism (Choudry et al., 2012; Choudry, 2015) in a context of the complexity of adult learning in informal environments.

Section two focuses on a value-based and critical approach to the status quo in relation to critical social justice (Bailey, 2017) and new ways of questioning neoliberal patterns through the promotion of regenerative culture in activism (Besta et al., 2019; Pigni, 2016). The third part analyses the strategy and tactics of action both from the individual and collective level and learning processes continuously organising the reality of social movements internally and externally (Biesta et al., 2014). Finally, the fourth piece opens the perspective of how social movements operate globally and their potential to collaborate and build organisational, but also interpersonal, networks (Castells, 2010b, 2015; Troll & Krause, 2016).

3.1. Holistic educational approach in the selected social movements

Polish formal education has changed a lot since 1989 and resisted many reforms both in structure and in curriculum on all educational levels. Many researchers have followed the history of the system and have reflected on its strengths and weaknesses (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2018; Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2020; Uryga,

2014), but it is still far from a holistic approach and far from bringing valuable and critical civic competences to young people. Rudnicki, in his studies on educational alternatives (Rudnicki, 2008, 2016b), emphasized that human rights, an antidiscriminatory approach, global perspective, and critical competences are missing discourses in Polish schools and appeared thanks to civil society organizations, informal groups, and the determination of individual teachers or headmasters. Adults and young adults who take an active part in social movements in the present day did not get knowledge or skills either from the school or from the university about the following issues: how to be socially responsible and act as an active citizen, what are the consequences of global climate changes or the political take-over of the judiciary, or how to create short, local supply chains as an alternative to the global food market. The Polish curriculum is monitored by researchers and civil society from various perspectives (Kuleta-Hulboj & Aleksiak, 2020), but all studies have stressed the absence of progressive issues related to the global perspective, diversity, and social justice. So, both knowledge and skills have to be learned through other forms of education simultaneously or after graduation.

The holistic educational concept was taken from the reflection on the formal education system, its standardisation, and criticism of the ranking of people without empathy, freedom, or strengthening their agency, where a holistic and critical approach together with quality learning were presented as remedies (Ricci & Pritscher, 2015). With “holistic pedagogy,” I mean the process of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes and the cognitive, social, moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of learning (Tirri, 2011). The holistic approach has also been identified in concepts such as global education (Le Bourdon, 2020) or education for sustainability and has emphasised the roles of each component on the way to social change. This revolutionary change expected by researchers in the educational system has already been noticed in informal education practice and adult learning (Choudry, 2015). The purpose of this section is to identify and reflect on practices that enable learning processes in selected social movements.

Social movements are characterised as groups that are politically oriented, gathering adults and young adults around a defined cause, to which they wish to devote their time, energy, presence, and sometimes even skills, contacts, or knowledge to fight against or for something (Castells, 2015). The learning approach isn't necessarily

defined by them either in their demands or in their rules or missions, but movements have a potential for learning from experience in the community or organisation. In many aspects, they have to start from the learning process for their members to integrate people under the same understanding of the issue and proposed solutions. Often it is connected to the process of inclusion and membership to the movement, like welcoming meetings in Extinction Rebellion or Forum organised once in two years by Nyeleni Poland.

The story of my engagement was by accident, as Facebook suggested to me an event, which was interesting. I thought that it will be more like a lecture on climate and the environment, but I went on the welcoming meeting of XR, I didn't know what's going on I such a perspective and I've received recording after the meeting and I started realised more. It was also the case that before I was interested in zero waste, vegan cooking and I think that I saw it in suggestions (in social media). And I went there with my ignorance and then I've started to educate a bit more and I tried to do something, and then much more intensive time came to gain knowledge and it is still happening, that new things and processes appeared and I do my best to understand it. IL_7_2020

The welcoming meeting of XR held in Warsaw was also part of engaged observation in the research project, where some important parts have been identified, such as the integration round, presentation of the main assumptions and structure, emphasising the role of civil disobedience and opening up the possibility to contribute to the communication loop by specific online application. The idea of face-to-face introductions at the meeting with people already engaged in the movement is important to establish relations before entering the online environment, which is why a simple lecture led by an expert is no longer opening for social learning and engagement process. Welcoming meetings are the first step to membership and to building collective identity as XR and rebels (as activists refer to each other). The community is built on understanding principles and that are communicated to them in the group. The understanding and mutual agreement on these basic principles and values is enough to take the first step and join the structures, which means that the diversity of people in the movement is one of the factors, that at the beginning shows easy access and openness, but in the longer term also provokes dissent and learning disruptions in the group as many other issues appear and are differentiated by its members (Biesta et al., 2014). In the case of the climate crisis, topics such as solutions for how to make

carbon emission lower are still discussed and are sometimes even part of the conflict between people, especially the solutions which promote nuclear power.

But all these movements don't have any knowledge criteria at the beginning, they open possibilities to learn from other activists both inside the movement and globally by taking part in trainings, thematic meetings, webinars, and online talks with experts and activists (examples for XR: climate experts, specialists in deliberative democracy, famous activists from the UK; for Akcja Demokracja: judges, Polish Ombudsman, activists from recent campaigns; for Nyeleni Poland: workshops on agroecology, online & offline courses on permaculture). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the communication was realised in online settings. Knowledge gathered by social movements is mostly open access, easy to find, and free of charge for participation in events, trainings, debates, or any other forms of exchange. The selected social movements use different forms of interactions to disseminate their message and learn other people, but most of them are inspired by existing tools for adult learning. Conferences, seminars, and debates to present, exchange, and deliberate often have a more pluralistic and democratic format, where people with different expertise and backgrounds sit together and discuss the matter. Communication as a dimension of social learning in activities and events designed and led by social movements is multilateral (Wildemeersch, 1999) and based on collaboration, common values, such as participation, equality, and democracy, which is recognised also in how diverse and inclusive the environment is.

When politicians, academics, farmers, and activists sit together and discuss issues of agroecology and details of modelling the Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union during the Second Forum of Food Sovereignty organized by Nyeleni Poland, all of them have equal contribution to the discussion and expertise was correspondingly shared, while recognising different positions. So, debates recognised power relations and the importance of multistakeholder dialogue, but implementing a participatory approach in space and giving voice to all groups interested in the subject, no matter if the interest is linked with professional competences, position/job, or experience. The importance of experience coming from farmers, food producers, and food cooperatives members or urban gardeners, through their social (often shared) wisdom and understanding of the issue is equally valid. The social movements in their origin emphasised the role of action and activities, which are one of the most vivid

sources of expertise and knowledge (Illeris, 2018). Authorities, who bring knowledge and titles are undermined by the flat structures and non-hierarchical structures of social movements, which as networks don't have simplistic top-down or bottom-up structures, but are more polycentric and fluid (Castells, 2010b).

Together with knowledge, more engagement appeared and a readiness for active participation in events and speaking about the issues publicly. This was also the experience of one of the interlocutors from Nyeleni Poland, who described the development of her knowledge and courage to speak about food sovereignty as one of the windows of opportunity to be one of the leaders in the movement. It shows how both knowledge, expertise, and communication skills have been developed and, as a side effect, the identification with the movement got stronger and deeper.

I had also a privilege to... it means pleasure, but also very important moment which brining merits and was critical for me, when I started to deal not only logistics, by also topial issues, it means, I said to myself... because I disregard myself, I said, you've done the content and I will deal with other things, you know, what was needed to make things work and I was listening. Of course I become imbued with all the things and I went on summer school, let's said that it was called Scola Campesina in Italy, co-organised by FAO UN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – from author), it's Andrea Ferante, who is great, well, let's say educator and activist for all agroecology and food sovereignty network. And it was like boom, and strengthened me a lot. And I've started to speak slowly, and then more and more, I've started reading, and then I've started speaking about it. For me Nyeleni is important and seems to be important as a being which join policy work with egalitarian assumption. IL_11

There is no possibility to graduate as a professional activist, but under many circumstances professional education could be in line with social issues or topics that activists fight for. For some of the activists, their engagement is strongly related to their professions or with formal education that they take part in, but goes beyond just knowledge and gives opportunities to use their formal backgrounds in social engagements (Jeziarska et al., 2022), such as the story of one of the interlocutor, who joined the movement as a student of law and developed his knowledge and skills through campaigning on the rule of law.

And then I was studying on first year of law and I was a volunteer, once a week I dropped to Akcja Demokracja and works on issues related with concrete campaign on courts, some kind of co-organising next rounds of protests, when there was the idea to appeal to president to veto, and other things in this direction, related with Supreme Court, National Juridical Council then, judiciary in general. And I've started to work in Action more regular in 2018, yes 2018, so from my first year of studying law, actually just before the second year. IL_14

Together with knowledge and an understanding of the issues, but also the power relations and broader perspective of the cause, such as repeating toxic mechanisms and based on the interest of majority rule and behaviour is the momentum, deeper reflection, and sensitivity that appeared on both individual and collective levels. The first change that is mostly observed by gaining the knowledge is inclusiveness of the language and some habits in communication that opened up the group for diversity, gender sensitivity, and created a common language for the group as a part of their group identity. Communication is one of the aspects of social learning defined by Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch, 1999), in the case of inclusive and sensitive communication and proper language is knowledge – knowing about the issue and communicating it in proper wording – and skills – using proper languages which is diverse, inclusive, and sensitive to welcoming all people as a part of the movement with their identities, expression, and emotions. Creating specific language for the movement is one of the key internal characteristics with unique terms, abbreviations, and special spaces for communication (including communication channels and online tools). All of the interlocutors mentioned the special wording for their engagement, for a group of engaged people and spaces for communication. The most developed language of the movement is XR Poland, due to their rebellion origin and self-organising structure, where they've spoken about circles, liaisons, coordinators, mandates, etc. Activists are often referred to as rebels and some special communication rules are immanent part of meetings, such as check-in and check-out when the group has opening and closing rounds of statements responding to what they brought to the meetings, how they felt and at the end, thanking, saying how each of them felt, and what they took out from the meeting. During the meetings, each person uses facilitation signs to agree, ask for clarification, state direct answers to what has been

already said, and also use a facilitation style, which gives space for all participants to take part in discussions with their opinions and emotions.

The diversity and inclusiveness are also reflected in the gender-sensitiveness of the language when speaking about gender neutral names or respecting all variants depending on interlocutor preferences (he, she, it, they or any other forms, which in the Polish language creates fundamental differences). Language sensitiveness is related to communication consciousness and is inspired by Non-Violent Communication (NVC), an approach that overcomes violence and power structures by increasing empathy and improving the quality of communication in the group. NVC is based on speaking about individual needs and harmonising interpersonal relations (Rosenberg, 2015). The attentiveness in language usage is also related to a reflection on the status quo and oppressive systemic habits that movements want to change starting from themselves and their structures.

In addition, knowledge activists have mainly developed and shared skills that they have already brought to the movement from different experiences and improved thanks to their social engagement. Skills are related to the space where in which they work, like exploring online tools, or an inclusive approach in language and structure to open space for diversity and vulnerability. Finally, activism as an active form of engagement is based on taking actions but can be also professionalised, and learning processes can be similar to professional development.

Describing skills that interlocutors use or develop while being activists, they spoke about many aspects from manual skill, like the preparation of banners for demonstrations to psychological support, which has been used as a part of regenerative culture and support in climate depression. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activists also had a chance to strengthen their online skills and initiate online activism. For some of the interlocutors it was easier. For example, Akcja Demokracja is much more online in their campaign tactics, but for many activists from Nyeleni Poland or XR Poland, online activism was something new and challenged their plans and strategies. This research was designed before the pandemic time, so COVID-19 and its consequences for social movements won't be recognised as a separate issue, but sometimes will be an important context of research statements.

Online activism was researched in various countries all over the world and confirmed the role of social media in the mobilisation of people, organisation of demonstrations, and coordination of like-minded people (Jost et al., 2018). Access to online communication, and the visibility of groups of people supporting the same cause on social media (like FB, Twitter etc.) built larger coalitions for engaged people (Besta et al., 2019). Among the selected movements, the most engaged in online settings were XR Poland and Akcja Demokracja based on their visibility, which is important to the creation of a collective identity as a kind of aesthetic reflexivity (Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999) like photos, live streaming of civil disobedience actions, and profile picture frames expressing support for issues depending on choice and momentum. Also, these two out of three selected movements are much more in line with the analysis of Castells (Castells, 2015), with its online networking comparable to Nyeleni Poland which was much more organic and grassroots. One of the interlocutors uses a metaphor of people-to-people networking. Still, all of them are based on cooperation and interlinkages between people, organisations, and causes.

Analysing the practice and skills needed to become an activist, it is worth mentioning the potential of activism as a specific professional way by working on projects, campaigns, and programs led by non-governmental organisations, which are usually legal representatives of social movements. Interlocutors of the research divided/defined activism in two aspects, both of them related to the way of delivery of the work and hours spent in activities and actions (Jeziarska et al., 2022). The first one was professional activism, which means the everyday work in organisations is based on different kinds of contracts and activism after hours, so social engagements after work in free time, mostly unpaid, but related to values and important problems that have to be solved. These are two extremes, but there are also variations in between and it was observed in interviews, when professional activists also continue their activism after hours or divided their activism between different forms.

Professionalising the third sector in Poland has been analysed and criticised by Chimiak, Gliński (Chimiak, 2006; Gliński, 2006; Vergara Polanska & Chimiak, 2016) and others as taking over the duties of the governmental system and the delivery of services based on grant contracts with higher quality and lower budgets, known as grantosis, which means a kind of disease that has consumed the non-governmental

sector and makes the social sector dependent upon governmental money and political will on the local, national, and European levels (Rudnicki, 2016b). In selected social movements, professionalisation is no longer connected to financial issues, as all of them are mostly financed by individuals and private donors and public money is absent in their financial reports, and if any both public and private money are taken, it is only when internal restricted rules are fulfilled. These social movements are aware of these challenges with grant contracts and the possibility of losing their independence, but are also looking for some options to institutionalise their activities and have legal identities for at least some of their actions and projects (in the case of Nyeleni Poland, one third of their program is a foundation, another is a coalition of individuals and organisations, where members can contribute with their legal entity).

Activism is a part-time job, mostly on a voluntary basis, which is counted in hours, days, or even years of continuously working for the sake of the cause, such as climate crisis, democracy, or social justice. In many roles in social movements, some specific competences are required to deal with finances, complicated political issues, or being a trainer or facilitator. As has been mentioned, activists have many opportunities to develop these skills during trainings and event, but to some extent the movement is built on competences and skills delivered by activists together with their social capital, professional skills, and experiences from other areas of work and life. Some of the activists had a chance to make it professional, but for many it is still a precarious job based on short-term contracts and mixed with unpaid time to deliver the job. Interlocutors saw that their competences are better paid on the job market, but are ready to contribute them in their free time and develop themselves not only as professionals, but also as citizens and aware people, who are taking care of the common good (Chimiak, 2022). Even as an activist, individuals aspire to build their own expertise in an area where they are useful or their opinion is valuable to the group.

The kind of privilege to become an activist resonates in many of the statements of the interlocutors, especially when it became professional and paid work. It also positively influenced their effectiveness and much more time and resources were dedicated to the topics and values that they are devoted to.

For me, the biggest motivation to move into professional activism is that it means working more hours for social change. If you're working professionally in a completely different area, and you have to squeeze activism right into the evening, weekend, early

morning, or somehow in between, it's always in between and you just can't give as much of yourself as you'd like to, even if you put in a lot of those hours. It seems to me that it is a gigantic luxury to be able to devote 8 hours a day, at least paid, and live from it, working for the benefit of others and still have time after work to do it, which simply adds up to more hours and more efficiency, as well as a stronger focus than if it was something extra. Besides, there is also greater professionalisation, because if you are a freelance activist, or even in some specific groups, you have limited resources. An organisation also gives you people to work with, people who have full-time jobs dedicated to this, not to mention funding and other various possibilities to professionalise your activities, which also makes it possible to do more. IL_13

Still, activism is a kind of engagement that is underfinanced and people with various skills often have to use them to make actions happen. There is a lack of people who are willing to participate and devote their time to organise and mobilise others for social change. Organising and mobilising, according to Freire and Horton, are interconnected with the learning process with the notion of risk, sensibility, and confrontation with others (Horton & Freire, 1990). Both critical pedagogues emphasised that organising has a big potential for learning of skills and values, which is why the importance of experience in organising and mobilising efforts for others and myself has to be appreciated in the process. In the interviews, the situation when one person is responsible for various issues and dealing with many diverse duties such as organising, knowledge sharing, public presentations, and fundraising is described often and for the purpose of the research is called activists' multitasking. The role of multitasking due to work overload and the consequences of activist burnout will be explored more in the part on regenerative culture.

All the interlocutors reflect on their self-development thanks to their social engagement, but it goes beyond market-oriented calculation. Professional expertise and skills are often used for subversive actions in contradiction to the neoliberal system and in favour of the progressive social change, such as the legalistic approach to prepare actions of civil disobedience or research skills to prove the importance of small-scale farming and the advantages of agroecology as an alternative food system. *And for me it was a discovery, that in NGOs (non-governmental organisations – from author) we can introduce the best ideas from the corporate world, and we are still*

activists, but we draw from the lion's den, which I had a chance to see from the inside.

IL_13

The quote about the group of activists who are engaged in social movements, addresses the high social capital, professional skills, but also time and resources to gain knowledge and skills that are needed. Some of them brought their expertise and experience in social engagement or other areas to the movement and shares it with other people on a voluntary basis. Some of them have professional backgrounds from multinational corporations and businesses, but decided to use it for the purpose of the social movement. Most of activists declared anti-corporate views critical of capitalism, but at the same time they are ready to use some of their tools and skills coming from the corporate environment to organise and mobilise people. Solutions such as online tools for communication were used, including newsletters, social media invented by multinationals on the corporate rule, and performing for financial interest or adopting structures of effective organising based on sociocracy- a peer governance system based on consent invented by electrical engineers and implemented in many companies by managers to increase the effectiveness of their teams (Rau & Koch-Gonzalez, 2018). Vice versa, activism work that went from movement to business, which was stressed by one of the interlocutors, who worked for a company and thanks to his awareness on power relations gained through the movement started to become one of the changemakers in the workplace and suggested some changes in the company structure and ways of cooperation between people. Defining both situations as subversive actions, while using knowledge and skills related to organising, assessment, facilitation and other forms of management are needed, which have been taken from professional, business, or even the world of multinational corporations to social movements to challenge the existing capitalistic system, which is considered oppressive and needs to be changed. There is a tension between these values, which are openly anticorporate and use mechanisms, skills, and structures, but there is an awareness of how to implement tools from the capitalist world and play with the environment to create rebellion, knowing that the rules of both sides are innovative and bring hope (Solnit, 2019) for getting out of the social bubble and integrating more people with different backgrounds by showing how their skills and habits can play various roles in making social change.

To describe the focus on values and the critical approach in the learning process, a separate chapter is dedicated. Finally, according to the holistic pedagogy approach, it is important to focus on what kind of attitudes are strengthened in the social learning process and how they reflect the practice of selected social movements. Out of the many described by interlocutors, depending on their experience and level of reflection, the two that seem to be the most relevant are: social responsibility and active engagement/ citizenship.

Responsibility as a topic has been identified from different levels, even though it is often not named as a topic by interlocutors. From the individual perspective, it is like a symptom of social responsibility, responsibility for duties, actions, my life and other lives, and is connected with the belief that as a person I can change the world or at least influence and add something to the change together with others. The individual and collective dimension of responsibility is crucial from the perspective of grounded attitudes in group identity. From the group perspective as a movement, all activists share the responsibility for each other during actions and demonstrations to secure their safety and be responsible for each other. It is especially important when thinking about actions of civil disobedience where trust of each other and responsibility for one another is important in the group, such kinds of actions as the checking on the safety of everyone after actions (being back safe at home) or solidarity actions when activists are sued in court due to civil disobedience actions. Responsibility is linked to actions as all actions are public (Arendt, 2020), and take place with other people as a group with a common identity, sensitive to other people and seeing their diversity inside the group. For members of each movement, responsibility is part of their engagement and understanding of activism, which I questioned together with Rudnicki and Zańko as a new form of activism (Gontarska et al., 2022), when the same importance and attendance are dedicated to internal and external actions. It is important for establishing new social movements as they are related to issues and values rather than just economic benefits (Schaeffer, 2014). When activists speak about equality, democracy, tackling toxic systemic practices, and power dynamics, they take care about the responsible implementation of values into the structure inside the movement.

Social responsibility is also connected to the goals of all three social movements, as they have recognised climate catastrophe, food sovereignty, democracy, social justice, and freedom of speech topics that are important for

conscious activists and citizens who are supporting progressive change both nationally and globally. The responsibility of each person is to understand the importance of the topics and actively engage in change for them, for other people, and for the next generations. The perspective of the next generations and taking collective responsibility for changing the situation at the critical moment, which is happening now, is present in the stories of all the interlocutors and official narratives of the movements. Together with knowledge and awareness of activists' position in society and opportunities for active engagement, which is also part of social learning (Wildemeersch et al., 1998; Wildemeersch, 1999), interlocutors reflect on taking the role and the effect and the way to go forward. On the other side of social responsibility and becoming an activist there is a general climate of depression and feelings of fear and anxiety due to the expected shortage of resources, climate disasters, and the negative consequences of global warming of more than 1,5 degrees Celsius according to IPCC reports (*Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*, 2018), which is projected to create conflicts and climate-related migrations. Depression and anxiety have implications for generating passive attitudes and are oriented toward individuals rather than collectives, but the interlocutors described this as part of their path to activism and engagement. Still, according to researchers on psychology of activism (Besta et al., 2019), the role of anxiety, fear, and feelings of threat in people's motivation to engage and take actions to support a cause has mixed effects, so the recommendation coming from various psychological researchers is to communicate social issues to a broader public seriously enough to motivate for joint efforts, while emphasising concrete solutions to solve it.

In the last decades, social responsibility has been taken over by business and corporations as part of public relations strategies and responses to demands from their stakeholders (Sen et al., 2011). Critics of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have shown that in the 21st century neoliberal markets have started expecting from companies not only products and services, but that consumers have begun to reward companies that also made good things and punish those who are doing wrong. The engaged private sector supports values and social issues that are also connected to the

idea of the development of cooperation and equal opportunities for the Global South (*Accra Agenda for Action*, 2008), but which also strengthen the role of multinationals in global policies, which was highlighted in the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (*Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015). The growing role of the private sector and its corporate responsibility is related to the weakening of the role of nation states and governments in solving global and local problems (Vogel, 2005). States are perceived as ossified and bureaucratic; their policies aren't flexible enough to answer dynamic social challenges. As the challenge is alarming, many consumers thought that companies have to also act in different ways (Sen et al., 2011). Recalling the anticapitalistic roots of social movements and their critical approach to the neoliberal system, the sceptical point of view expressed by Vogel (Vogel, 2005) is expressed in relation to human rights violations and playing unfairly, especially on the Global South and with authoritarian regimes. Civic pressure and watchdog activities forced the UN Global Compact (*Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Implementation the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework.*, 2011) to establish some standards for global corporate citizenship, but still on a voluntary basis as the willingness of the multinationals varied widely. The concept of global citizenship was taken over by the category of global corporate citizenship (Vogel, 2005), which isn't eligible for participation in civil society organizations and their efforts toward global sustainable development.

Another key attitude that is developed based on two aspects of social learning (actions and communication by Wildemeersch) is active engagement (Wildemeersch et al., 1998). By active engagement I understand participation in actions in public spaces and engagement in internal processes inside movements as components of individual involvement not only declarative on level of principles and values (which will be elaborated later), but also in practice of making things happened. As the social movements are decentralised, the democratic ownership of their existence, as Freire and Horton agreed, is "that the more people participate in the process of their own education, the more the people participate in the process of defining what kind of production to produce, and for what and why, the more the people participate in the development of their selves. The more the people become themselves, the better the democracy" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 145). Attracting and engaging more and more

people to demonstrate their support and stand for their claims is possible when not only their members know themselves, but also when they act together publicly.

So, I think, that it's important that there are some branded actions, such as Red Widows for example, so each person who sees these Widows knows that it's XR. It probably shows kind of strength of the movement, that the actions aren't one off, and they are strong and everything blends together. IL_7

Massive participation in social movements is a kind of goal of each of them, but they also understand that the more recognisable and dynamic activists are in public space the more people could be attracted and engaged in the future. During the engaged observations of an XR performance (a funeral of the future in July 2019, Wrocław, Poland) and an Akeja Demokracja demonstration (such as Chain of light) both movements were involved and visible enough by their events, attributes, characteristic performances and activist engagement (not only presence, but also playing roles, having banners, etc.). Their visibility was intriguing and attractive for passersby and bystanders, some of whom decided to film or take photos and some of whom even participated for some time in the action. Also, during events such as the Food Sovereignty Forum, there are many situations when integration between participants is the main goal, such as an introduction round for all Forum members to get to know each other, creating images of food sovereignty with all people who would like to contribute or taking photos of participants, who chanted slogans supporting the cause and the movement. These internal actions are projected as a first step in the ownership process, because it makes people visible and present in the space where action takes place.

There are more forms of being engaged and active than just public space. For the new social movements selected, for this research, all the work was done inside, the kinds of processes, organisation, and mobilisation are equally valid. For inside actions there are three levels of engagement that could be identified as: presence (physical presence in group or in meetings), speaking out (expressing opinions, giving advice, commenting, taking a position in the negotiation process), and taking responsibility. Based on interviews and engaged observations, social responsibility in networked movements is highly connected to active attitudes and engagement in building the capacity of the collective.

But definitely, when it comes to the form and the way, the dynamics of action, in my opinion, this is my opinion, not everyone will probably agree with it, it will never be fixed, because this is the nature of this movement, because it is a movement, it moves all the time, it's organic and every now and then I say, someone will..., will be motivated to do something, someone else will be motivated to do something, but we are in a network, we can inform each other about it, we can get mutual support, we can create some new coalitions of cooperation IL_11

According to Wildemeersch and Vandenabeele (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010b), building community as mentioned by the interlocutors is part of *citizenship as a practice* by creating a democratic environment inside the movement and networking people around the cause. This is also an attitude which is recognised as engaged and motivates others to active participation, networking or participating on a project, which is developed by rules of ownership and the democratic/equal participation of the social movement. The social movement as a kind of community is a part of society which influences social change in all areas where they appeared as activists or as a group. The inclusive approach inside the community makes a change that can be leveraged by other groups and society on the national or even global level.

3.2. Value based & critical approach to status quo

Analysing the role of values in a frame of activism and as an integral part of holistic approach in adult learning in this chapter is also as important as analysing and reflecting on the critical approach and power relations which both shape the social movements. Mainly, I consider the declared values of each movement and perspective of activists on that issue. From a theoretical perspective, looking for an umbrella for all the values and frames took me to the idea of critical social justice, which will be elaborated on more as a theoretical idea with regenerative culture and power mitigation as its realisation. I will also critically analyse the privilege and social capacity of the activists and their social role in the movements as a new idea to challenge the status quo, being at the same time beneficiaries of the system and challenging its mechanisms as a movement.

Each selected social movement declared their values under their missions, goals, and principles, which were written down in their strategic documents or

published on their website and other communication channels. Values are also discussed and reconsidered as part of their organisational culture, which is participatory and open for diverse and critical points of view.

For XR Poland, values have been defined and agreed under the 10 principles of the movement, which have been elaborated in the movement's description (*About Us*, n.d.). From the narrative, the following values have been identified: respect for nature, genuine freedoms, justice, functioning democracy, equality, diversity, learning from other movements and experiences, safe and compassionate and welcoming space, nonviolence, equitable participation, respect for all individuals, consensus. All of these are also part of the agreement between each and every activist, who would like to join the movement during introductory meetings (which was part of the engaged observation, Warsaw 2020), where all points were presented, questioned, and discussed to agree to before being subscribed to all communication channels. The way of presenting is also connected with values of participation and space for comments as well as space for dissenting voices, which is highly related to negotiation as an aspect of social learning (Wildemeersch, 1999). By negotiations, activists meant also topics and issues that they decided to leave for individuals to deal with and not negotiate inside the movement or as a part of common consensus.

Well, what's definitely beautiful about XR is that there's this attitude of, listen, let's all join hands now, across the divide, and let's fight for our planet. And I won't hide the fact that this is something that moved me a lot in the beginning and I was one of the people who tried to maintain this equality there and there was no situation where a particular political view was going to take over the group IL_1

In the cases of XR and Nyeleni Poland, the values are internationalised by the official statements on the global level. For Nyeleni Poland, it is the Declaration of Nyeleni agreed in Mali in 2007 (*DECLARATION OF NYÉLÉNI*, 2007) there are: equality and equity, social justice, diversity, respect of traditional knowledge, and human rights, including the right to food and land, environmental, social and economic sustainability, heritage of food production, participation and a democratic approach, challenging power relation structures, collective identity, grassroots knowledge and experience mentioned by authors and signatories from movements all around the world. The values identified by Nyeleni globally also has an interesting tension

between the global and the local (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014; Davies et al., 2018). On one hand, they are universal for all branches of the movement in the world, and on the other hand, activists emphasised the postcolonial perspective which deconstructs universalism and shows plurality and postcolonial particularism.

Finally, the values presented by Akcja Demokracja help the movement to choose issues to deal with in their actions such as respect for human rights, environmental protection, and social justice as a core values. There are also some more important issues such as democracy, diversity, freedom of speech and assembly, and equality and diversity, which are related to their style of operating and mobilising the general public to participate in action. Democracy is one of the important issues in actions taken by the movement and addressed in its name, but still there are many other equally important topics from the perspective of Polish society that have been taken far by the movement. A multilateral convention on the issues expresses one of the social learning dimensions (Wildemeersch et al., 1998), which is not positioning organising teams as experts, but rather creating alliances with other organisations and experts and engaged activists to create their own petitions on the issues that matter to them and like-minded people. This egalitarian approach to creating topics is possible due to the set of values considered as progressive.

(A)ll the movements for any kind of rights, apart from the right to individualisation or the right, I don't know, some of the various rights that have now been invented, which are focused more on some kind of capital or the right not to pay taxes. All these human rights movements are deeply rooted in values such as solidarity and empathy. Perhaps these are not so much values as attitudes, but some kind of community value and a holistic view of the world are fundamental. It seems to me that these are things which are also very much lacking at present, if only in education, and if we do not develop values, then even if we are separate people and believe that someone has a right to something, without these values we will not recognise that right and we will not behave in a way which fights for those rights. IL_10

One set of ideas referring to rights and obligations is closely interrelated with the citizenship concept and understanding the relationships between various actors in society, but especially citizens and the state. The state can be understood on a national level, but also as European institutions or global regimes, like the World Trade

Organisation or the United Nations. All three selected movements criticise the asymmetry in power relations between state and society and have a critical approach to the neoliberal political agenda. Getting back to the roots of this idea is much more critical in the sense of understanding society and connecting with the idea of social justice. All three movements speak about oppression within the system from the perspective of their topics and in general from the human rights approach. Specific groups in particular, such as small and medium scale farmers, consumers interested in local, ecological and sustainable food production, minority groups, engaged citizens, scientists focused on climate changes, and aware citizens taking care about climate changes, are oppressed by a toxic system that does not give them space or the possibility to speak out or influence the policy which empowers them. The power relation structure and ambition to identify and change to be more fair, just and equal with respect to all diverse characteristics is the main goal for all selected movements (Cox, 2018). Making social change is preceded by reflection on the concept of critical consciousness by neo-Marxists (Cox & Nilsen, 2014), intersectionality (Grabham et al., 2009), but also privilege as a factor to make social learning and consciousness possible in that time and space, and create opportunities for the activists who decide to join the discussion and social movements.

I think that there are things that are missing in education nowadays, and if we don't develop values, even when we will be separated and we will consider, that someone has rights, without the values we won't respect their rights, we won't behave in a way to support their rights. IL_10

The perspective of rights, prejudices, and power structures which are consciously applied by activists both outside and inside the movement to mitigate power in structures and to not repeat toxic behaviours and cliches is related to the practice of critical social justice (Bailey, 2017). Critical social justice has its beginning in the philosophy of education and the distinction between critical pedagogy and critical thinking. While critical thinking is more a kind of skill that helps to evaluate ideas and decide if you are pro or against, or from the liberal approach if you are going to buy it or not, critical pedagogy discloses oppressive power dynamics in the system to deconstruct a universal definition of truth (Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Freire, 2000; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical social justice could be an umbrella value for all three movements, which have been established based on

a critical approach from the founding point and centred on the idea of also changing unfair power dynamics in learning process (Gottesman, 2016) not only in theory, but also in the practice of activism, what Choudry called learning activism (Choudry, 2015). Even though the movements operate from the Global North perspective, which is primarily privileged in the systemic approach, the critical consciousness following the neo-Marxist perspective (Cox & Nilsen, 2014) is high enough not to dominate the discourse about any part of the topic by the majority.

Activists participate in social movements under specific values that they have agreed upon. Still, making this kind of agreement is difficult as it is related to the reflection and attitudes presented by individuals. Among activists, it is important to follow their principles, what is called *walk the talk*, and also reflect and continuously review the way they operate and if it is cautious to mitigate the existing power structures. These movements found themselves as easily accessible due to free membership based on engagement, accessible and clear rules of cooperation (even if advanced for some activists), and duties for members which depends on their interests and availability, but the highest attempt is the coherence of values and mindsets. Interlocutors emphasised how inclusive the movements are, but also noted some dilemmas between the inclusive approach and the effectiveness of the movement, seeing traps in the multi-topic approach without any umbrella ideas, which would be able to gather people, and which activists would be able to agree upon.

I'm not saying that we always manage to achieve this in Poland, because it wouldn't be true, I would be lying if I said that we are very egalitarian in the sense of who is in the Nyeleni, the movement, then there are often new people, new settlers from the cities and so on, that we have farmers in our groups, but it also varies, no. We have made a lot of effort to keep the movement in touch with the peasant movement in Poland, to make it more open to peasants. We've made a lot of efforts to keep the movement in Poland more in touch with the peasants, with the peasant movement, no. We even tried to talk to Agrounia, they came to us, no, you must have seen it at the Forum, but it's difficult all the time, because it's very hard for us to get along, despite everything... What I like about Nyeleni is that, in the context of other political and leftist movements, it's not an identity movement, no, I mean it's not like, um, here we have to get along perfectly well to do things together. No, it's just that we have one thing in common and on our

forums there are people from the bottom to the top when it comes to political views and we concentrate around... And that's why it's important for me, because food is something that really concerns everyone and you really have to agree with everyone on this, no. IL_11

Having said that, activists gather in social movements around one cause defined by common principles, but their goals are diverse and they argue about them before entering into agreement and negotiate them many times and/or revise them in the meantime. The common cause and joint struggle are enough to become members of the movement and act together, but other issues are also part of discussion and debate inside the movement and create potential situations for disagreement or conflict. The dimension of social learning defined by Wildemeersch and others (Wildemeersch, 2014; Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010b) as negotiation was primarily understood as negotiation between the group with the politics, people and interests outside the movement, which is relevant to the situation when, during the time of research in Poland, many other social issues became alarming and important to stand for them, such as women's rights (especially in the case of reproductive rights – the Women's Strike in autumn 2020). The social issues such as the further restriction to reproductive rights in Poland is an interesting example, as none of the selected movements described themselves primarily as feminist or women's organisations (Alpizar Durán et al., 2007), but they recognised the politics of difference and the deconstruction of liberal discourse initiated by intersectionality (Grabham et al., 2009). The urgent issue was in the area of human rights where all of them referred to their mission and narratives. Each of the selected movements demonstrated different reactions to the protests: Akcja Demokracja played an active role campaigning and supporting women's rights with online petitions and actions in public space (like the Arcade of Shame in Warsaw, 28/10/2020) XR Poland did not officially participate in the protests, but their activists were present and visible during demonstrations in various cities by displaying their symbols. Also, two activists performed an act of civil disobedience by entering the area of the tribunal and putting a list of their demands on the door. Finally, Nyeleni Poland was not involved officially in any communication on the issue. However, some of their members participated individually and posted on social media about it without making any affiliation.

Not all activists in Akcja Demokracja and XR were pleased with the engagement of others in the protests. Among their arguments, many concentrated on strategizing and prioritising issues and at first engaged to support defined goals and, once these were reached, supporting other causes or not supporting the cause and staying with the one they had picked at an earlier stage (many activists who stand for democracy and free courts were not satisfied with the feminist approach). Some activists distanced themselves from the reproductive rights issue and declared support for the law established in 1993, but not to liberalisation, which the protests called for. Also, offensive language used during the demonstration with insulting words coming from some of them was undermined its goals. The disagreement/dissent was provoked by situations from outside the movement, when activists had to decide on their values and actions individually, but also in the collective context of the organisation through an online declaration (mailing of Akcja Demokracja prioritising campaigns) or during meetings within self-organising structures in XR.

We have our structure, which is called SOS, it's a concept of self-organising structures, which is doing what I've already said, so grouping people around one area of work and coordinators between themselves or liaisons of the groups communicate with each other to make our work common. On one hand it sound great, there is no hierarchy, we are partners, everyone communicates with each other and based on consent and consensus and in general I don't know and it's great, but on the other hand in my personal feelings it's kind of stricture, which needs a lot of maturity, both individual from people, and maturity of organisation. And we are not mature organisation, and Poles in my belief have difficulties with ahierarchic structures... IL_3

The structure of XR has some rules on how to make decisions, but consent is still the way to have no objections and to decide to move forward with the decision, while in consensus the decision is made by the whole group and needs the agreement of everyone. Reactions to conflict situations and consists of looking at the roots of the conflict and discussing and facilitating between interested members of the group. The processes are time-consuming and require the willingness to participate from the conflicted sides, the tools to give the opportunity to discuss various layers of the conflict situation, not only arguments and knowledge, but also emotions, power relations, ownership, and privileges of activists. The complex process of conflict

resolution designed by facilitators is voluntary, but once worked out a positive solution can consolidate the group and bring them to the next phase of group development. Not all the members are satisfied with the results of the process; some of them decided to leave the movement due to stress, tensions, and a lack of understanding of their perspective and losing trust in the group members.

Still, during the engaged observation, the negotiations inside the movement between individuals and between sub-groups were also important as various topics where there were no references to principles or demands had to be discussed or recognised, and sometimes the structure of the movement itself didn't have the tools or capacities to make a decision on behalf of the movement and it still depended on individuals. The consequences of disagreement and dealing with diverse opinions inside the group are natural in the process of formulating such participatory structures, but also influences group contacts and attitudes such as openness and trust. Communication inside the group to facilitate important discussions is one of the roles taken over by some of the activists, who can see their individual capacities in this area. Even so, the criticism and opinion making in such a diverse structure is an ongoing process and communication rules can make it smoother, but the differences will be visible. One of the interlocutors, who situated herself as a facilitator in relation to Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch et al., 1998) and his description of the roles and how to moderate groups under the rule of inclusive representation of diverse voices.

And then I've started naming myself as facilitator of the group (...) Then after a few months I noticed, that this is kind of role, in a sense that my role was trying to strengthen the power of the people, who in Polish reality often faced criticism in discussions, and where I found that it was a big problem during meetings, that it was easy to bring down discussion after any simple criticism, even when it wasn't based on merits, the clash of opinions appeared and activist who initiated was stepping back. It was one of the worst things as it caused that our work especially at the beginning of development, and it moderated us. IL_2

The role of facilitator in a dispersed organising system is inspired by sociocracy (Rau & Koch-Gonzalez, 2018), and prioritising inclusion and diversity is crucial for the movement's cohesion and collaboration between groups. All movements need some kind of coordination and facilitation between activists and the internal structure. The more participatory the approach, the more people, time, and energy are engaged

in developing common sense and working together. As the roles depend on skills and attitudes, but still fluctuate between sub-groups and situations, this is probably why many members declared their support for processes and solving issues. While from the outside movements seem to be concentrated on reaching their goals, inside the engagement is much more perceived as a process, where each experience or action brings some reflection, discussion, and disagreement, which is based on the Kolb cycle, but this also consumes a lot of time and energy. All the movements take care about communication both in online and offline settings, starting from the way they name activists (as rebels, activists, or members) and the language that they use in communication with allies, especially in social media or mailings (urgent appeals by Akcja Demokracja) or newsletters (by Nyeleni). Speaking about climate catastrophe instead of climate change or global warming, which doesn't fully or properly define the scale and complexity of the problem faced by society worldwide. The argumentation was followed by some of the international newspapers such as The Guardian (Carrington, 2019), where the bottom up approach of social movements has been noticed. Gender-sensitive language is also part of communication habit, but also respecting all the rules of inclusive language and nonbinary personal pronouns were easy to accept by all activists. Sensitive and inclusive communication is one of the characteristics of the three movements, still some tensions and discomfort occurred due to some activists' behaviour or too much power, which turned into conflict and oppression. Such a diverse environment is not free of conflict and harms but has enough capacities in problem-solving as well as through early-warning strategies, safe spaces to speak out, and understanding of power relations and structures, which can be revealed. All these are a kind of security valve in the communication process, which won't be free from tensions, but is designed in a way to have the tools and skills to deal with them.

The difference between the selected movements is the level when the conflict appeared: on the first level it is only in comments, unfollowing subjects or not participating in petitions or action; the second level is when it appeared as data or structural or personal conflict or conflict of the values inside the group, where it was openly recognised and problem-solving tools were implemented successfully; the third level was when the conflict hadn't been recognised on time, usually it was complex and the sides were not ready to participate in mediation or the mediation process failed.

In these cases, it usually ended with a breakaway of individuals or with groups leaving the movement. All three levels have been observed as a part of the engaged research observation and are perceived as a consequence of deep and multidimensional engagement together with relations, emotions, and values brought as part of struggle, the readiness to face challenges inside the group and openly addressed them is understood as a strength of social movements and a consequence of their networked (Castells, 2015) and organic character of collaboration. This kind of organic collaboration has been described by one of the interlocutors in the case of the Nyeleni Poland organisational approach:

the word organically seems to be important, that I personally care, and that's why I like this movement, cause there is a space, sometimes more or less nervously. Because there are of course conflicts and many of them were about who we are, what we do, who checks mailbox, what about money, who is making decisions and so on, and so on. But at the end, regardless of all the processes, we can, due to the fact that we are not formalised, we stay in kind of familiarity between each other. When there is a project, which gathers people the power is in the core people to make it happen we need one, two, three people to coordinate and drag new people in it. IL_11

The interlocutor reflection also describes the organic way leaders of projects or actions have been identified and that it is based on individual interest and motivation to make something in a selected area, but is also linked to others' motivation to create a group of responsible people to make things happen. A similar way of leadership was observed in self-organising structures, where the individual decision supported by other group members constituted a leader or leaders. Both Nyeleni Poland and XR Poland position themselves as flat structures and multileadership organizations, when leaders do not have the same face all the time and the rotation to decrease power concentration is one of the rules inside the movement. The leadership also has many faces in Akcja Demokracja as under many occasions activists are represented by the team of the organisation while delivery of signatures happened, still not one leader, but it is usually teamwork with strong recognition of thousands people standing behind the demand. The leaders are more representatives and spokespersons of broader civic interests and organise space and tools to speak out with a common civic voice related

to specific issues. The way social movements challenge traditional leadership is their method to deal with power concentration.

This is kind of phenomena in social movements, far from the model strengthened by political parties in Poland and Europe (leadership in politics), where most politicians build their own story and recognition. Activists also use storytelling as a method of speaking about the cause, such as climate crisis or human rights, but not to build their own position outside the movement. Many activists have enough skills and characteristics to be leaders, but still leadership is realised as a tool to achieve another goal rather than only being a powerful person or decision maker. Leadership related to a cause and demands rather than with the exhibition of one person's image, position, and power is one of the symptoms of the limitation of power processes introduced in all the selected social movements (Horton & Freire, 1990). One of the interlocutors defines it as multileadership, when an organisation has many faces, which equally represent it and strategically decide its role and engagement in different areas of their competencies. The question of responsibility in such a flat structure and changeable leaders still remains important as it refers to the neoliberal ideas of effectiveness and the perspective of reaching the expected results of the activism.

By neoliberal, I mean a focus on reaching identified goals, which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound and are the clear responsibility of one person or group if they can't be achieved. This kind of responsibility is divided equally across all activists of the movement and depends on their possibility of engagement related to time, competences, and level of energy and readiness to face the role or action, but is declared as long as members of the group are ready to carry it. However, taking over or exchange takes place much more often than in traditional power relation structures as well as the readiness to step back due to burnout, emotional difficulties, or other sensitive issues. Multileadership is strongly related to the ideas of regenerative culture and the limitation of power, but also to challenging the existing system and looking for more just, fair, and equal solutions. All three movements identified the existing system as exploitative and unjust, which needs deep changes towards a more democratic, equal, and fair structure, led by social justice and sustainable development. That is why inside their structure their members take care to not repeat mechanisms from the system, sometimes even calling them toxic (like XR Poland), and consciously and continuously reflecting on overcoming cliches and

schemes. Many discussions are taken to recognise, understand, reflect, and change them, which takes a lot of time and energy, but for activists it is necessary to agree within the group on values, style of cooperation, and motivation to change the world by starting from themselves and how their behaviour influences others.

Self-reflection is often difficult and not always taken on at an early stage to solve problems, which is why many conflicts are provoked and open up after some time when it is not only an individual experience and several people express their disagreement. The dissent and tensions appeared often as activism is voluntary work, motivated by the emotional engagement and sensitivity of involved people. Due to the enabling environment in the social movements, activists build relationships, trust ideas, structures, and openly speak about their minority identities, but then they are much more fragile to any kind of conflict inside the structure. The relations and openness are usually broken as a consequence, and even though awareness that solving conflicts could move the relationships forward and make them even stronger and deeper, still many activists leave the movement or at least distance themselves from it when this happens.

The rotation of activists and flow between like-minded movements and informal collectives shows that the movements are also flexible and create a kind of synergy in the same topics which finally strengthen the voice of engaged people in Poland and make them more visible in public space, no matter which organisation or group they represent. The conflict is even more intensive when there is a lot of tension related to actions and a lack of regeneration between a high level of engagement and individual feeling that one has to do it immediately, but also sarcasm and many kinds of bad feelings related to being overwhelmed (Niedźwiecka, n.d.). It is quite idealistic to think and organise people in a mode of fully participatory approach, but as Wildemeersch described the tyranny of participation entered into the democratic structures in recent decades, “the social learning is actually ‘confrontational’ rather than ‘consensual’. It is dividing rather than binding. It takes place in situations and contexts where the joint enterprise is interrupted rather than smoothly continued” (Wildemeersch, 2014, p. 21). All the interruptions and disagreements inside the movements are the more educational processes influencing the establishment of an activist’s identity.

Identity within social movements is much more based on organisation culture and relations between activists than the material proof of membership. XR Poland is one of the most attached to the recognition of its logo, principles, strategies, and tactics of engagement. Akcja Demokracja then equipped their activists with visuals and materials to manifest their part of collective identities. On the other side of the spectrum, there is Nyeleni Poland whose identity is occasional and flashing. The definitions of identity and membership are no longer based on ID cards, privileges related to membership (such as voice in voting sessions, the possibility to be a chair person or have any other forms of power), and special rules dedicated for members only. The model of the social movement based on privileges based on membership is connected to the origin of trade unions, which is well-known in the Central and Eastern European context like the tradition of the Solidarity Trade Union, as well as the teachers who united at the Polish Teachers' Union and their general strike against school reforms in 2019. Membership can be proved through participation and acting in the movement with respect to values and principles, but mostly by active position, taking responsibility for some parts of actions, duties, or organising and being present. Building a personality within the group can be based in part on minority identity from a vulnerable society group, but it is stronger when connected to a desire for social change.

Identity is related to feelings of injustice, which mobilise individuals to become engaged and act to support the group. From an individual perspective, this part of identity is defined as politicised identity, when there is an understanding of power relations and inequalities in society (Besta et al., 2019). The thing that joins people is not their similarities, but joining forces in the struggle to change the world and also the critical and political connotations with the issues that the clash is about. The phase of getting to know their position in the system, power dynamics, and privilege is part of the learning process from the critical perspective introduced by the process of learning activism identified by Choudry (Choudry et al., 2012; Choudry, 2015).

So for me it's member driven, the thing that's talked about a lot in Action and in organizations, that kind of like a social movement, he's the leader in some sense, I would hit that up strongly in that context, but also the team. And it seems to me at this point that the most important role of a leader is to enable people to give as much as they can really, to empower them, to bring out what they're best at

and to go along with them. It's not necessarily that you always have to be in front, sometimes you have to let someone else be in front who just happens to have more knowledge or a better idea, or it's just their moment to go. So it is more about enabling, coordinating, reinforcing that seems to me to be the most important thing. I am not saying that vision is not important, but it is no longer at the top of my hierarchy of what a leader should have, as it used to be. I used to manage differently, I just had a very clear vision, I knew exactly what I had to do and I dragged people along with me, here we are going this way. And with time I learned to listen a lot more, which often corrected me and improved the way I was going. IL_13

Leadership in activism is understood as part of collaboration and one of the aspects of social learning (Wildemeersch, 1999, 2014) when it contributes to creating a collective and acting for a common cause. Presented by interlocutors are reflections on joint efforts to share power, space, and actions in the group for reaching goals and long-lasting sustainability. According to the typology presented in the psychology of activism (Besta et al., 2019), leaders are important from the perspective of collective identity and their strong relationships with groups and close characteristics to other members of the movement are critical for building a collective identity which consists of the goals, values, and norms of the group through dynamic interactions with the environment and people from outside the movement.

This also includes the group identity of social movements, which Castells (Castells, 2010b) referred to as network society and challenged the idea of stable leadership when one person leads the group in all cases. Castells doesn't say that activists don't need leaders, but that fluidity of leadership is important to guarantee sustainability and competences in such a diverse structure as a network.

This kind of attitude is also recognised not only in the leadership of the movement and public relations strategies, but also in overcoming a monopoly on expertise and knowledge during events and meetings. Thinking about sharing knowledge and skills as a common good and tool to empower activists and encourage more people to join the cause is not only related to a inclusive and participatory approach, but also to sustainability of actions and understanding that movements working for democracy, human rights, and climate justice, act as a network without

a centre (Castells, 2015), where people are flexible to change their roles and step in or step back depending on the situation or action.

Awareness of well-being in activism and time for self-regulative practice is also present in defining activism, but also in the structure and agenda of each movement (Besta et al., 2019). In the structure of XR Poland, regenerative culture is one of their key principles and many groups refer to it during their everyday work through affirmative introduction, where activists claim their support and understanding that finding a way to well-being in activism, relaxing, and pausing in the struggle, limiting the feelings of being personally responsible for all the world is necessary to a long-term and balanced performance. Delegated circles work in the structure to secure well-being during everyday activism, but especially before and after actions in public space of civil disobedience, which are characteristics for XR and require more effort and energy than any other kind of demonstration. Organising activities like walks in forests, empathy circles, groups of people who deescalate conflicts came under their mandate to make the movement more resilient. The category of resilience is key when activists spoke about climate depression and mental health in lasting activism. For Nyeleni Poland, this is also a kind of attitude to plan activities in phases, giving time to relax and reflect, but also to engage in other issues and work professionally, especially for those members who are active in agriculture and the agenda of the movement respects their calendar of agricultural activities. In Akcja Demokracja, preventing burnout has just started to be part of their reflection, due to their intensive and multi-topic social role in the civil society sector that their activists and organising teams are exposed to.

Psychologists recognised activist burnout as a frequent problem among engaged people (Besta et al., 2019; Pigni, 2016). Taking a definition of burnout from the professional sphere, it is characterised by three main factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, feelings of decreased development (MacNair, 2006), and connecting it with stress cumulation and somatic symptoms. Activist burnout is one of the higher costs of engagement based on values and expressing part of your identity (both individual and group ones). For many decades, stress and feelings of overwhelming responsibility were not recognised by social leaders and movements. The unwritten rule was that once you were in the struggle, you had to be courageous, strong, and always present and ready, because it is about the cause. The cause was

often more important than health, relationships, private issues, sleep, or relaxation. If activists weren't strong enough, he or she would leave or disappear, but no one said a word about exploitation in civic engagement or social work. Emotional work is part of activism, when a person adjusts his/her feelings to the standards imposed by the organisation (shallow emotional work) and efforts to match feelings to expectations of his/her post or the action in relation to the target group (deep emotional work) (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). However, long and deep empathising with others is one of the reasons why activists decide to leave their social engagement or for some time remain demobilised and dissatisfied (Besta et al., 2019).

So that's why it all led to this, it was a long process, but it was also initiated by my coming out of my burnout, but also by the change of the job position, well this is related to it, to being closer to some other competences I had before, to working with people, but also to the desire, well, directly, to move away from current politics as the main element of my activity, because simply, well, if you combine it with some activism based on the principle that I can do something and I want to do something, and that I have to do it, because it is also my job and it is also a responsibility towards people who put their hopes in me and pay my salary, it was very burdensome for me. IL_15

One of the interlocutors shared his experience with activist burnout in the context of his professional and after-hours activism. His feelings of responsibility as an attitude to his work and expectations from the team, also in addition to other people being involved, was one of the identified reasons of permanent stress. The way he changed his attitude to activism to make it more sustainable and to include a well-being component to his social work was a long process, and shows that a reduction of activities, less engagement for some time, and other individually important things to do (like hobbies, relaxing, sports, etc.) are integral parts of recovery.

Many other interlocutors have spoken about prevention activities and implementation of the idea of sustainable activism by organising their working time and space, as well as trust, mutual cooperation, and responsibilities in the team. Organising the role of activist could be one of the skills to learn as part of social learning (Wildemeersch, 1999) and learning activism (Choudry, 2015), especially when the sustainable factor matters.

I can certainly tell you a little bit about how I coordinated this moment of work with X just before the Forum. Then I just had a day's work, went to yoga, slept, meditated, ate peacefully, worked for a couple of hours, got up and left the computer and didn't do it, so this is kind of my personal achievement, but I didn't watch people doing it, no. In a sense, I tried to instil this attitude to whoever I could, that listen, let's do it at such a pace that everyone will take care of it, only I had this space, because I didn't do anything else at that time, but, I say, I devoted the whole, like, month to this work. Whereas others do it after hours, so it usually ends up like that, they do it, we do meetings in the evening, nobody has strength, dead eyes, everybody's enthusiastic for a while, and then when it comes down to it, there's no response, for example, sometimes, no. So, well we are certainly working on it, but there are also people who are more successful and less successful, I would say. IL_11

Sustainable activism is a goal rather than a fully implemented idea, but it is important how much Polish movements accomplished in the last years by openly speaking about the systemic reasons of activist's burnout. The cultural understanding of activism and the collective social effort of working for ideas, usually without any wages, with profits such as gratitude, self-development, and a good heart, but also with a lack of respect for this kind of engagement from decisionmakers and politics, has had a major influence everyday situations and the motivation of activists. One of the first initiatives in Poland to openly discussion this in third sector was Natalia Sarata and her RegenerAkcja initiative for activists experiencing fatigue (*RegenerAkcja*, n.d.). This was followed by a report prepared by the Ombudsman's Office (Cypryńska-Nezlek, 2020), which alerted the entire sector about the crisis inside and opened up debate about it from the perspective of individuals and their wellbeing.

All three movements, with their demands and vision of social change, prepare their activists in the long term to act and react on different fields, sports metaphors such as marathon or relay races illustrated narratives of success, failure, and the importance of collective struggle as part of the identity and DNA of the movements. That is why activists openly spoke about difficult topics such as depression, anxiety, and burnout, and were looking for collective solutions or were going out from the movements and organisations to speak out.

Regenerative culture is still more a postulation rather than a realistically achievable goal in the short term, especially because of the backlash observed in many areas related to human rights and the shrinking of spaces for civil society engagement (Aho & Grind, 2017). None of the movements studied have a mass character, although each has a goal, there are not enough people to fulfil all roles and responsibilities with the ambitious plans and sets of actions of each movement. Making activist' goals and aspirations realistic is part of strategic thinking, but it comes with great difficulty to these groups, and their causes are important and urgent, such as decarbonisation or the immediate response to climate crisis.

According to the systems thinking process (Gürdür Broo & Törngren, 2018) the iceberg model illustrates how activists' burnout looks from the perspective of patterns, with underlying structures and mental models (*Ulex Project*, n.d.). In these patterns, I found the neoliberal focus on effects, results, and measurable achievements, where effectiveness plays a crucial role. These patterns are lively, especially in groups with experience in working in business or multinationals, but also any others who grew up in neoliberal system, including formal education based on grades, tests, or measurable results of the learning process in accordance to an answer key. This extends to trends for individuals to be busy, with fully-booked agendas, working weekends and evenings without time for meetings with friends and relatives. These underlying structures are related to the market-oriented focus on effectiveness, measured results, and the productivity of people, whose lives are dedicated to achievements rather than relationships, self-regulation, or well-being. Well-being is something to be earned or achieved and is not part of a balanced lifestyle. Relaxation is a kind of luxury and people have to earn it through hours and days of hard work. With the mental model, each individual has to be the best in his or her activities and compete with others. Based on the systems thinking process, the neoliberal system is one of the structures influencing activists' burnout and the way of addressing the issue only on the individual level rather than seeing it as a political consequence.

The socio-political level and limited political opportunity structure are systemic sources of activists' burnout (Besta et al., 2019). The political context of social movement activities is related to the high expectations of activists to be efficient and successful in their struggle and application of expected social change, but also in becoming a massive movement and to have an influence on public opinion. Some

social movements also experience backlash, understood as the fierce opposition to their demands, which sets back the negotiated changes by several decades (like the reproductive rights movements in Poland). Social change is usually accompanied by resistance from authorities, institutions, and groups that have power or benefit from the status quo.

Well, certainly, yes. It was very developmental everything, all the activism, I don't hide the fact that I never learned so much as I did during that time. What changes in me specifically? I think I'm much more hostile to governments, any governments, I wasn't friendly then anyway, but now at this point I'm even more radically, very hostile to governments, well even more hostile to corporations. I've definitely started to take stronger action in the company I work for to introduce some changes, because before there wasn't so much pressure from my side, definitely. And also I'm definitely more sure that we live in a mega oppressive system and the amount of violence I've experienced from the police, from the perspective of these two years, it's something unbelievable, whether it was next to me, whether it was towards me, well these people just don't get why we do it, or they just follow some orders they have to follow, but there's definitely something wrong with them. I think that the longer we play at activism, the stronger we will be against this system. IL_1

Challenging the neoliberal system through the selected social movements is one of the priorities of all the movements, and even still the awareness that it is a transformation toward change, and that they won't be able to achieve it with a short-term perspective. As Freire & Horton expressed, "we are in a sight of a process. I always say that the deepened transformation in society never arrived on a second Monday morning. Never. The radical transformation of society is a process, really (...) There'll be plenty of people who will see that it happens. Tough problems take time and you have to struggle with them" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 216). Activists have recognised this transformative approach and can define it in contradiction to the existing rules of the neoliberal agenda and identifying how deep and systemic the social change needs to be.

It seems to me that this is something which can really transform the whole system, because creating relations around food and de-monetising it... It seems to me that this is something that can really transform the whole system, because

creating relations around food and de-monetising it, food in general, food trade, only restoring what is said agroecologically, no, as if there was a different vision of who a human being is in the ecosystem and also restoring a different understanding of food as this part of the living ecosystem which I take in order to keep myself alive and which at the same time I need to give something back to this ecosystem, not only rubbish, to put it in shorter terms, that I do not exclude myself from this ecosystem and for me it means being part of the ecosystem by the way IL_11

Together with the transformative, a revolutionary approach is also visible, as both Nyeleni and XR Poland defined their visions of social change as radical in their consequences. The status quo is defined as toxic and not healthy for people and the planet, which is the reason to act for a better world, which is yet to come. This change is defined as the development of awareness and criticising the current path of economic development, as well as the widening of global inequalities and the strengthening of groups already socially and economically disadvantaged. Activists from Akeja Demokracja expect progressive change as it is described in their narratives but follow values that were framed in their mission. Activists manifest their dissent, anger, and criticism by challenging the current system and precisely-drafted demands (Cox & Nilsen, 2014). However, their involvement doesn't stop at criticism, but also presents, in a fragmented and sometimes idealistic way, a target state, and sometimes even plans the way to get there. As in the case of changing the food system or halting climate change, the social and economic change proposed by Nyeleni Poland was described by one of the interlocutors from the movement. Together with this critical approach, we can also observe hope for change and creative ideas, how to make this change, or how many simultaneous changes happened and the factor that provoked it is the emotion which is called hope. Hope is defined as emotion, but references to this theoretical category support people in changing the world (also by educational processes) and are deeply rooted in critical pedagogy (Freire, 2014; hooks, 2003; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Solnit, 2019) and global learning (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014; Davies et al., 2018). Hope as a category is closely related to the group or groups that expect change and whose voice has not been heard so far. Activists are also such a disempowered group, in a community sense, because they raise unpopular issues,

stand in opposition to the existing world, and devote time and energy to striving for a new social order.

It's also a movement, it's a great mass and without a leader the mass has to move in some direction, so here it's a bit difficult as an individual to have a strong influence on the effectiveness of the whole, more on being in this community and being in a place where you have to be, no, nurture hope, because Rebecca Solnit wrote superbly that the fact that we don't know what the future holds gives us hope. So it's also an important thing in all this, not that it's effective and I'm sort of arranging it here, in the sense of, you know, I'm sort of doing things to see that something really changes, at least on a micro scale, but this deeper motivation, my deeper motivation is more, closer to some ethics, morality and sort of nurturing hope and slowing things down or preparing for them, because this is also a deep adaptation. IL_3

Hope is mostly a collective feeling, which can balance fear and overcome many obstacles in activists' lives, but also opens others' imagination by encouraging them to see the broader perspective and believe in a better tomorrow (Besta et al., 2019), which is also a kind of psychological reflection. Still, hope has also its sociological background as Solnit (Solnit, 2019) has described in the context of activism and social change in the US, recognising also the global context. According to her, the critical and leftist approach is often marked by failure and bad-news and alarmist narratives, so that the hope is coming out from negative feelings and the spectre of resignation from the expected social change. *The activists who deny their own power and possibility likewise choose to shake off their sense of obligation: if they are doomed to lose, they don't have to do very much except situate themselves as beautiful losers or at least virtuous ones* (Solnit, 2019, p. 20). Hope changes the rules of functioning in activism and steers individuals and groups towards agency and success, even if deferred.

Activism founded on hope for change, even if on a micro scale, provides a sense of empowerment and was singled out by one interlocutor as uplifting/ forming activism.

It was a bit like that, we also dealt with critical health psychology as part of psychology, my friends and I also dealt with criticism of the way science is done

for quite a long time, we organised a conference called "Science, a human thing", we generally came very strongly from this critical, politicised milieu, but at the same time I saw permaculture as a more positive way to respond to the climate catastrophe, because I really missed it... It was very hard for me to take this critical approach to everything, this deconstruction, not that it has to be..., or to go with rebel activism, I wanted to be an uplifting activist, somehow I felt so, and this permaculture attracted me to it. IL_11

The reflection shows that a critical approach in activism is one of the stages of self-development in social engagement, but what is more important is to create alternatives and create new ideas on how to change the world. This is also emphasised by critical pedagogues and theorists of political identity, who argue that new language to describe social struggle and concepts such as citizenship, democracy, and identity is needed to articulate hope and possibilities, not only to highlight differences (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) or to reconstruct critical democracy. To make social change happen, pedagogues, educators, and activists need something more than just language of deconstruction and criticism. Forming this aspect of activism is also linked to the agency and ownership of the social project and the goals for progressive or radical change designed and desired by all three movements.

On an individual level, the opportunity to act and influence the reality created by a social movement allows us to see ourselves in action and to see the change that each activist co-creates. This kind of attitude contributes to self-development but is also established on the social capital that each of the activists has. The social capital (Alheit, 2009) of each member is different, still in all three selected movements it is estimated as high and diverse, so the collaboration can be fruitful and inspiring, but requires rules and members who can support creating principles, building the group, and their smooth cooperation.

Many of activists have already had some experiences in social participation, and their commitment makes them more engaged and critical, seeking new ideas to channel their energy, emotions, and interests in social change. Most of them look for new experiences not only due to the focus of the struggle, but also because of its democratic and open structure and the way of organising people and new forms of actions developed by the movement. As the social capital of the activists is high, they have a basic awareness that civic engagement is important, they have enough free time

or flexible working hours, or are students or retired people who can devote some time to their engagement. Usually they are middle class people, living in big cities or making the conscious decision to leave the city and move to a village, where they can create their alternatives (especially in the case of Nyeleni Poland). Most of them have a university degree, are comfortable with online tools, and have the ability to use materials in English. Their professional experience can also be easily translated to activists' practices and bring added value to social organising, but also transform other environments in line with a participatory approach.

Yes, I think so, well, if what is also happening now, you see, in terms of the action, stay at home, no, I can stay at home, because I feel privileged, for example, that working for an NGO I can work at home, and that I even have savings. You know, this is real. And I also have my own flat. I can, for example, provide free psychological support, because I have something to live on, and it's a very serious problem, and I think to myself, I mean I understand it very well, and I'm also afraid of it, of its class character, that it's so big-city, and it's a bit middle-class. IL_4

The activists as a social group are well-educated, usually financially stable and are one of the privileged social groups. However, they exercise their privilege for the good of the community by becoming spokespersons for issues that are socially important but lacking weight and scale in the mainstream (Choudry, 2015). It is rather different than empowering oppressed groups to step into debate and demand that their rights be respected (Freire, 2000, 2014). It is significant how privileged individuals, when they become a group fighting for an issue that is important to them collectively that they are, at least in part, deprived of that privilege. This is true especially when it concerns actions in public space and relations with the police or opponents of a given cause, as experienced by activists during demonstrations (such as Akcja Demokracja) or non-violent civil disobedience actions (such as XR Poland). However, privilege itself ensures that they find the time and space to have this kind of debate in the public sphere and that their voice is sometimes heard (Giroux & Witkowski, 2010). Unlike socially marginalised groups who fight for their right to self-determination (Freire, 2000), the activists of the chosen movements fight for their values rather than for their own rights or ability to participate in political or social life. Critical reflection

(Wildemeersch, 1999) allows them to see their own privilege, to limit their symbolic power, and when relevant to use their privilege for a socially important issue.

3.3. Strategies and tactics to act: learning by doing/acting, learning activism

This section focuses on the practice and learning of activism through experience in actions and various forms of action inside and outside the movement that attest to its fluidity, growth, and change. Learning activism is a process, but one that takes a variety of forms of action both as a group and as individuals at the same time. The range of actions, the way they are organised, the activist roles learned or acquired, or, finally, the activists' commitment to political change and resistance using their civil rights to resistance form the axis of these reflections.

Social movements gather people under common values and priorities, but the key area of interest is to act together through different kinds of online and offline actions in public space and make their voice be heard as a commodity which is addressing specific issues, such as the environment, climate, human rights, food systems, or democracy. Action is one of the dimensions of social learning by Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch, 1999), which is described as activities in public space where through the experience of performing learning opportunities appeared. The catalogue of actions undertaken by the selected social movements is very wide, from visual actions, such as billboards of the Democracy Action, spray-painted stencils with the XR graphic symbol, the subversive taking over of monuments (action with the dwarves in Wrocław), or political party banners after the election campaign, through performative actions in the urban space such as large-size banners (Akcja Demokracja, action during the presidential campaign) or the appearance of widows dressed in red, performing a funeral of the world (Funeral of the future, July 2019, Wrocław) or die-in actions, that is, flash mobs during which a group of people pretended to be dead (XR Poland), as well as manifestations such as solitary blockades of streets and traffic (XR Poland), mass demonstrations (Akcja Demokracja: Chains of Light, lexTVN), or civil disobedience actions (XR Poland).

The novelty, apart from the fact that they are completely new people, is also the fact that they allow themselves to be much more outspoken in the public space

and attack the city more violently than all those... I mean, of course, there were movements in Wrocław which attacked the city more violently, of course, but they were inaudible, because there were some small groups. Here, on the other hand, it is a large group and the media, our local ones, have also fallen in love with them, because they have done from the very beginning, well, it was incredible, that there was a great number of media events, the kind that photojournalists and cameras love, and this allowed them to be such a significant organisation. IL_8

Nyeleni Poland works in a different way, focusing on promoting its values and knowledge about agroecology or permaculture, so their activities are spaces for exchanging experiences, knowledge, and connecting people with similar goals and views through forums, workshops, and networking people from all over the country and supporting the global community.

It's a bit of an ephemeral structure, because Nyeleni, as a movement, has three pillars. One is the food sovereignty forum and the community which gathers around it, the second pillar is the Agro-Perma-Lab and its educational and agro-ecological part, and the third pillar is the Living Earth Coalition, advocacy and politics. That's it roughly, but it's a simplification. Sometimes we do something just with people who know each other from Nyeleni, we decide that we need to do something, I don't know, with the Nyeleni.pl website or some workshops or something, and sometimes somebody does something on their own and attributes it, somehow affiliates it to the Nyeleni movement. IL_15

In each of the three movements, the way of organising actions, as well as mobilising other activists for common involvement, is different. Democracy Action begins its actions in the online space by formulating a civic appeal to a precisely identified person or persons who have an influence on the solution of the stated issue. This process is preceded by strategic decisions within the organisation's team, and sometimes by consultations with activists through online surveys sent in periodic messages. Once a set number of signatures has been collected, selected people go to deliver them, which is usually accompanied by additional actions (streaming, short films, media messages, graphics about the issue the petition addresses). If the topic is a priority, a large number of signatures are collected and it has become a social momentum, larger actions are organised, usually in the form of demonstrations

(LexTVN demonstrations, happenings as part of the presidential campaign) or other media events (such as the Passage of Shame in relation to reproductive rights).

XR Poland's actions, in turn, have so far consisted mainly of two types of performative actions and civil disobedience. The first are performative actions prepared with a focus on visual refinement and the possibility of media coverage due to their uniqueness or ingenuity, which was the case with Funeral of the Future (Wroclaw, 2019), Red Widows (Wroclaw, 2019), and Christmas Eve (2019). All of these actions had very elaborate props and surroundings (such as a coffin carried through the city square, in which there was a mirror with the possibility to take a selfie, singing mourners, an obituary or red widows appearing in the urban space), they involve activists prepared to play specific roles, but they are also open to be joined by other people, creating a surprising situation for outsiders in the public space.

The second type of action is nonviolent direct action, a type of civil disobedience that consists of blocking streets, roundabouts, entrances to institutions, i.e., important public places, in order to draw the attention of the public and decision-makers to the impending climate catastrophe, as well as its causes and consequences for humanity and the planet. The basis for participation in these actions is participation in trainings, meetings, the division of roles, as well as detailed preparations (including setting the date and place, which require special secrecy). Among the functions to be fulfilled during this type of action are people who take care of the support (including food and proper clothing) and safety of the protesters (wearing green waistcoats), people who act as an anti-repression team, i.e., offer legal support, document police actions, and reduce tensions between outsiders and the protesting group (wearing pink or white waistcoats) as well as the coordinators of the action. In this type of action, a clear communication system is important, such as in the case of a decision to end the blockade, but also for the security and trust in each other between activists both during, before, and after the action. In this case, the scale of the internal preparation and learning process seems much greater than the duration of the action itself.

I mean, yes, not much, and here I will say that if we want to assess whether it is much or not much, we still have to take into account the fact that this is the first movement, at this point, if we were to account for grassroots movements in terms of civil disobedience, it seems to me that XR has the most actions and it is also very difficult to prepare such an action, It seems to me that with the culture of

activism in Poland, which in fact does not exist, it's really not that easy to convince people to go out and risk their freedom in the name of the fight against climate criminals. IL_1

In 2020, there were also initiatives of one-person actions, or so-called solitary blockades, when, with the support of other activists, one person blocked a street on their own with the message that they were doing it because they was worried about the consequences of the coming climate catastrophe (Facebook post). In analysing the history of Polish civil society (Ekiert et al., 2017; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Gliński, 1996, 2006; Jezierska et al., 2022; Vergara Polanska & Chimiak, 2016), civil disobedience is not a popular strategy of demonstration in Poland, as there is the risk of not only legal consequences, but also mental consequences in the sense of having ones emotions and values exposed publicly and opening oneself up to others' disagreement, creating a lack of understanding of even bad feelings. Nyeleni Poland focuses its actions on community learning and networking people around one cause, food sovereignty. The participatory nature of initiating their actions, as well as the collective way of deciding and the capacity-based and participatory model of cooperation makes their actions democratic and open to all people in and around the movement.

Through their consistency, all three movements seek to expand their spheres of political influence and pressure on decision-makers. Wildemeersch calls this way of acting creativity: *creativity with respect to the action dimension thus consists in combining and recombining available resources, or mobilising lacking resources, with respect to achieving the goals* (Wildemeersch, 1999, p. 42). Although, their scale of action aspires to achieve systemic goals, they are still on their way to achieving them through activism in the public space.

Interlocutors in the biographical passages from their interviews referred to their activist experience in organisations and movements, but also in science, education, or other professions. Strategies and tactics of action are also related to learning activism (Choudry, 2015) not only in the movement in which they are currently active, but also to experiences brought from other social activities. Only two of the fifteen interlocutors stated that participation in the movement was their first activist experience. Most had been socially engaged, participating in demonstrations or working with NGOs. In social movements, the orientation towards change is not only individual - change at the level of values and attitudes, but also aims at systemic

change, and to this end builds an institutional movement (Skrzypczak, 2016), which constructs structures and systems, as well as social institutions that function in consciousness as a set of people pursuing common goals through common means, and also as a set of norms regulating relations between them, other groups and individuals, and organisational form.

This is an important issue in terms of experience with other organisations and consciously joining the chosen movement given the proposed norms and organisational form, as well as being able to choose the role and area that activists want to address. However, a structure only makes sense if it works and is filled with activists who learn with each experience:

For this system to work like a well-oiled machine, you need oil in the form of a few practices, which are things like good communication, feedback, trust, a few soft, structural and cultural practices which need to be developed, of course, but without that it will not work, because we are used to these hierarchical systems, to being told what to do, so at the beginning it is usually quite difficult to get used to the fact that, ok, I have this role, I have trust, I can do what is in this role and just forget a bit about the fact that... because we're usually scared to do it, we usually have this reflex to ask someone's opinion if I'm sure I can. But the assumption of XR is also post-consensus, so we perform these tasks and then we learn, if something went wrong, ok, as if we want to act quickly, so we learn from this experience and then we perform the next one well.

IL_5

The work as a dimension of social learning (Wildemeersch et al., 1998) described by the interlocutor, is also experiential learning in the community (Usher, 2018; Usher & Edwards, 2007; Wenger, 2018) through practice and critical reflection on action as a necessary component of activism. The drawing of conclusions or the evaluation of processes is not the same as the corporate evaluation of effectiveness or the achievement of quantitative and qualitative results, although it has a strategic planning component. The risk of not fully achieving the assumed results, making a mistake or a having failed action is not, as in business, a financial loss or lack of profit, but rather the group's energy expenditure, possible loss of image, if the process of preparing the action was carried out in a participatory way, is rather another experience and lesson on how to do things better in many respects, what to avoid, and

what to pay particular attention to. This kind of critical reflection not only towards the outside world, but also towards one's own actions and impact on social change is proof of how consciously activists learn and enter into their social roles in the movement.

The topic of taking on specific roles in movements is an important issue in individual identification with them, as well as taking responsibility for specific actions or participation in group processes. In his theory, Wildemeersch dissected the roles in social learning: facilitator, obstructionist, go-between person, and core actor. The interlocutors who shared their stories and experiences in the three selected movements were mainly core actors and facilitators (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010b). By core actors we mean people who mobilise and organise a movement for collective action. Among the activists participating in the study, many co-founded the movement at its initial stage, were in the initiative group, or were at the first joint activities and events. Some who joined over time now occupy key roles in the organisation, while those who co-founded the movement have moved into roles of facilitating and moderating internal processes, which also highlights the theme of change and expending energy, as well as an awareness of burnout and the need to mitigate power within the movement, but also frustration with the idea of participation. Conflicts within a movement that are only just establishing its structures and clashing on the level of values and opinions are the kinds of interactions that democratic models do not envisage because they lead to antagonism (Biesta et al., 2014).

And I was actually quite disgusted with the whole process, because I was a bit surprised that we could go through, as it were, this process again, which was incredibly difficult, because there were a lot of arguments, a lot of people couldn't come because they didn't agree with it (...). And I was just terribly disgusted after that. In fact, it wasn't until the end of the second trimester that I started to notice that the process itself was such a key, that in a sense, no matter what we come to, it's still there and we'll come to the same thing, because in the end the second process was maybe a bit different, but more or less in the same direction. It was still imperfect and we still didn't manage to resolve all the issues, but anyway you could see the azimuth in which we were heading, this vector of sort of action, that it was heading towards this sort of formula that was sent from the UK. IL_2

The scarcity of filling roles and the impossibility to establish them precisely leads to a phenomenon that interlocutors described as multitasking or constant learning for a new role, especially if it requires expert knowledge or specific skills. Combining roles, moving smoothly between them, filling in gaps, or a kind of activist multitasking is the reality of the social movements studied and the experience of activists. Appearing in successive roles, moments of transition, and satisfaction are the next stages of development at the individual level, but they also show the challenge at the level of the activist community related to the still insufficient number of people involved and the new competences to be acquired while learning activism (Choudry, 2015) and developing as a social movement. Rotation allows the skills of a larger number of people to be shaped, and divides responsibility between them, but also because of the departure of people each structure has a constant shortage of people and the process of learning newcomer activists is ongoing.

I note the disparity between the work inside the movement and the actions observed by the general public on the outside, in the space of the city or the country. However, attempts to assess or weigh the costs of activism against the effectiveness of these activities are not within the orbit of this study. For the purposes of this study, I assume that all activist action, whether internal or external, is political and takes place in public space (Arendt, 2020; Giroux, 2021):

And it is, unfortunately, an arduous task, but there was a moment or a time when I noticed that, for me, the best way to fight climate change at the moment is to work on the community, on our being with each other, on changing the system, but within us. Not somewhere outside. Only the way we implement it, because this is also our assumption that, this is also one of the principles I mentioned, that we actively challenge a toxic system, but we don't leave this one, we don't blame anyone, that it is somewhere outside, that the problem is somewhere outside, it is also inside us, so this work in the community changes this. IL_5

The time and energy devoted to preparing an action, reflecting, casting roles and tasks, as well as reaching consensus and resolving opening conflicts are aspects of developing civic awareness and social learning that permanently change activists' values and attitudes through participation in the community. The development of new social movements (Castells, 2010b; Paleczny, 2010; Schaeffer, 2014) is another interruption in the social learning process given by practitioners, which by performing

a democratic and participatory approach is leaving behind the status quo and the limitation of political influence and results. Activism, from the perspective of Latour (Latour, 2005), is challenging the neoliberal agenda both as a matter of facts and as a matter of concern, as kind of a hybrid forum, where discussion and debate about an issue such as climate crisis or social justice are happening. The debate is also continued publicly towards decision makers through advocacy work both on the national and even global level. It is mostly a monologue and calls for cooperation from decision makers by social movements, but sometimes their advocacy work also has an important expert role within already-designed collaborative mechanisms:

(...) it was as if it happened at the time of publication, at the time of the first presentation of the report of the High Panel of Experts on Nutrition, which is attached to the Committee for Food Security, which is, in a way, commissioned by the FAO to provide expert opinions, and which is, perhaps, the Committee for Food Security. I learnt it all there, that's what they taught me, that, as a system of these organisations, which is really very twisted and that, really, La Via Campesina over the years has developed this mechanism of civil society, where public policies and different panels, different documents published by this CFS, that is this Committee for Food Security, there is this mechanism, well, of civil society and indigenous communities, where they kind of take part in this work and discuss how these documents should look like. But it's not at the stage where the document is ready and we now, give us something here, what do you think about it, it's at the stage of creating the content. And it was very strong. IL_11

Strategic advocacy work is different from the practice of lobbying done by business and multinationals, as it is devoted to the public interest and common, universal values rather than a particular interest. It is also part of the learning activism process (Choudry et al., 2012) to recognise political potential and a window of opportunity for the issue and the momentum to push it forward. Still, these kinds of activities also contribute to social change designed by the movements and open different areas of public engagement, where other competencies, such as understanding and following the political processes or diplomatic and analytical skills are required.

Last but not least, another aspect of strategies and tactics to act is learning (for) civil disobedience, which is mostly the experience of one of the movements – XR

Poland. The educational idea was launched in an article by Gontarska, Rudnicki & Zanko (Gontarska et al., 2022) to describe the counterhegemonic practice of social engagement and consciousness, which leads to civil disobedience as one of the most powerful nonviolent tactics of resistance. For the authors, recognising the story of resistance on a global level. In the context of Polish civil society, the new approach taken by XR activists and their awareness about their rights, possible consequences, and ways to put the activism forward and open a new chapter in Polish social movements was thought-provoking. This part of the research was also designed as a tool of pedagogical intervention which aimed to demonstrate and strengthen the voice of young people concerned about the fate of our planet in the realities of the hegemony of the neoliberal, neoconservative, populist, and repressive state. For the purpose of this project, learning (for) civil disobedience is one of the tactics in social movements that has empowering and community-building possibilities. Looking from the inside of the movement, the potential for citizenship is crucial and, at the same time, overcoming the idea with strong, manifested resistance with an awareness of both the global and local context of climate crisis, while also playing with the toxic neoliberal system generates a new quality of social participation both on the individual and group level:

And it's also hard to go to actions with people you don't know very well, if you don't know someone well and you don't trust that person, it's clear that you won't feel comfortable next to each other at a civil disobedience action, because it just might be that you need to help someone, the other person is not sure if they will get that help. IL_1

The cohesive effect of the experience of civil disobedience combined with a deep activist consciousness builds a kind of ethos for this movement on the level of values and as a kind of interpersonal community in times of crisis.

3.4. Global context/ perspective (interdependencies & dimension of work)

The global perspective of the action and the topics undertaken was one of the criteria for the selection of the movements for this research project. However, it is worth extending this aspect to take into account the three dimensions of performing by social movements: the synergy of actions and coherence of goals at local and global

levels, networking at European and global levels, as well as between similar organisations operating in parallel in many places in the world, and, finally, the broad organisational and interpersonal cooperation in pursuit of social and political change. All of them are connected to the social learning process as well, but here I am going to focus on its global perspective.

The interlocutors defined the global perspective and referred to it in their statements as the context in which they situate the actions of the movements they identify with, as well as their personal motivations for social action. Activists seem not to separate the local from the global thread and emphasise its continuum. This is particularly evident in the educational and advocacy work of Nyeleni Poland, for example on the issue of the European Common Agricultural Policy (Food Sovereignty Forum, 2020, Warsaw), where demands and challenges at local, national, European, and even global levels intersect in comparison to food markets outside the European Union. Expanding one's thinking about global interdependence, even if more in context than at the centre of the action taken, opens up the possibility to look more broadly at food as a human right and to go beyond a transactional analysis of one's position and market situation (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010):

Suddenly you begin to understand why, I don't know, even if there is famine in Ethiopia. Initially, you think it's because people are lazy, because the system tells you that if someone is poor, it's because they're lazy or, I don't know, they have a lot of children and they don't want to work. And suddenly it opens up some kind of critical understanding of why this is happening in the world. So for me it's, well, putting the puzzle together and completing it. Whether it's the theme of food sovereignty or natural resource extraction or whatever, it's all one big board that you put together and see more clearly. IL_10

Expanding awareness at this level and noticing how each topic, be it social justice, rule of law, the food system, human rights, or the climate crisis, operates on a global level seems to be a milestone in understanding the global situation and how in many places around the world people with the same values and goals are fighting for similar issues. Seeing social movements not as competing but as supporting each other on a global level, i.e., as an infinite network of cooperation and interpersonal connections (Castells, 2015), strengthens commitment and a sense of community in an

intangible, but very important way, influencing motivation and giving a deeper meaning to local actions.

Recognising interdependencies on the global level is primarily related to information, but also to an analytical and critical approach by seeing connections between processes and understanding them as a part of power relations not only between people, but also animals and the planet as a whole environmental focus. Together with knowledge, the critics of the system also appeared and a leftist challenging of the power structure by opening it to global connections and situating the issues of their concerns in a broader political context (Vanden et al., 2017):

At the same time, somewhere this whole global perspective which has been created in recent decades is another element which leads to the fact that I feel a little bit responsible for everything, in the sense that I see this map of interdependencies between what is happening here and between my choices here and what is happening in Chile, for example, where batteries are being mined or very large quantities of fish are being caught so that they can come to Europe to be eaten. IL_2

The theme that unites all movements and is at the centre of their concerns and worries is undoubtedly the climate crisis and its consequences. This theme unites all interlocutors regardless of the subject matter of the movements in which they are active or the roles they play in them. Along with climate change issues comes a sense of individual global responsibility and reflection on the possible consequences from this perspective, as the above quote illustrates.

A global perspective is a constituent part of activists' analysis and thinking about the world regardless of the scale of their action, and it also stems from the movements' aspirations to engage people en masse around universal issues that do not close themselves within any geographical boundaries. Interlocutors referring to the global goals of social change inscribe it in their optics of action, while at the same time, if it is not present enough, they notice its absence and criticise it. Taking it into account is therefore a kind of certainty and it seems that it can be seen as one of the issues that are no longer discussed in movements, but it is a level of knowledge and critical consciousness that allows one to join a group, to understand its goals and actions and to get involved.

The division between the local and the global in context appears inextricably linked, especially in XR Poland and Nyeleni Poland. Although Nyeleni Poland focuses on local solutions to inequalities in the food system, it builds its foundation on a network of global connections between local communities (Vanden et al., 2017). This division is more fluid and universalistic in Akcja Demokracja, where what is progressive at the national level is seamlessly combined with a European perspective, and this usually has a visible global context, even if not centrally located, as is the case with issues of civil liberties or democracy (in the sense of the rule of law or equal rights for minority groups). The often emphasised convergence of goals on a transnational level and their universalisation creates synergies, but also has a positive effect on the sense of power and empowerment on an individual level (Troll & Krause, 2016). Contributing one's own commitment, one's own activist contribution to a process that is happening simultaneously in many parts of the world, and involves other people, can also be reflected in individual motivations.

Troll and Krause (Troll & Krause, 2016) argue that global education stakeholders (especially civil society organisations and their activists) have experience both in global thinking and in identifying interlinkages between global issues and local realities, as well as in raising critical reflection on them but also in developing skills and resources to offer support in the transformative learning and exchange process of a global movement.

Based on their typology, all three selected movements aspired to become radical new humanity rejecting old powers and focusing on building alternatives. Still, a kind of spectrum between global thinking and global regime has also to be defined, as many of them play in a seditious way with the global opportunities given by neoliberal powers, mostly for networking, strengthening their political and civic presence, and mainstreaming their priorities.

When theorists describe new social movements, they emphasise their networked nature and decentralisation, as well as the difficulty of capturing a precise framework of where a movement and its activity begins and where it ends (Castells, 2010b, 2015; Schaeffer, 2014). This understanding allows each movement to organically grow and intermingle, which, on the scale of this research project, can be observed by identifying activists' involvement in more than one movement (the case of Akcja Demokracja and XR Poland), but also the relationships they have built with

each other and how they relate to each other, whether by inviting each other to events or collaborating. In this research project, networking between the studied movements might seem interesting, but it is more important to see the broader perspective of cooperation on a national or transnational level, and the flow of activists between movements and organisations working towards similar goals centred on critical social justice as a value from a global perspective:

Greenpeace is also starting to promote human rights. So people are beginning to see, especially activists of many years standing, that sometimes there is no one issue without the other, that it is difficult to remain silent on an issue if you are working on another one, and that the greatest effect is achieved when you join forces. Because this is also really about cooperation. The Action Group's greatest competence is campaigning, and it does not necessarily have very deep or broad expertise in the specific thematic areas in which it operates, so relying on partnerships, on the knowledge of others, is also important, and linking movements together is also very important. This is what we are striving for.

IL_13

Building partnerships and developing social networks takes place through joint activities (project partnerships or partnerships focused on a current topic), sharing expertise (at events or conferences), and skills (giving each other social media platforms or tools, as in the case of Akcja Demokracja online petition system), reinforcing each other's messages, and also exchanging good practices or experiences between organisations. The list of cooperating organisations is long, as in the case of Akcja Demokracja, the Committee for the Defence of Democracy, Citizens of the Republic of Poland, or the Free Courts initiative on the topic of the rule of law on the national level, but also aHang from Hungary or Delic from Romania on the European level in connection to threats to democratic state mechanisms. There are also attempts at partnerships that are less obvious in terms of values, but converge in terms of goals, such as the establishment of a relationship between Agrounia and Nyeleni Poland during the Food Sovereignty Forum in 2020. In terms of networking, XR Poland is the most effective among sister movements in the region, in Europe and within global structures, but individual activists from socially engaged backgrounds through their contacts, experience, or biographical threads broaden this perspective to include

relationships with the whole climate movement, such as the Youth Climate Strike or Climate Camp.

An important characteristic at the global level is the fact that each of the three movements has counterparts in other parts of the world that have emerged from below, based on an identical model of functioning. Hence, at the organisational level, each of the movements has at least some, if not several, natural partners for building international networks. Each of these networks is more or less formalised, has its own communication channels, events where their representatives meet, and internal means of communication (whether between directors as in the case of Akcja Demokracja within The OPEN Network - The Online Progressive Engagement Network or activists as liaisons in the case of XR Poland). Cooperation with likeminded organisations and sisterhood movements all over the world gives the subjective feeling of belonging to a much larger social enterprise than would be indicated by the actual number of people participating in activities at the local level (attending meetings of a local group or signing a specific petition). Reference to a broad network of cooperation also appears in narratives presented to the public in order to lend credibility to one's position and the relevance of demands on a global scale.

Chapter 4: Main findings & dilemmas

This chapter summarises the conclusions of the analysis of the empirical material grouped in three areas, as well as entering into a dialogue with the theoretical framework by connecting and proposing some solutions.

In the first section, the main conclusion is the recognition of activism as a radical form of lifelong learning. Among the arguments supporting this conclusion, I summarise the four dimensions of social learning, as well as referring to the structure and organisation of selected social movements as politically engaged networks that challenge the status quo at a systemic level. In effect, I propose following Biesta (Biesta, 2006), a subversive take on the notion of lifelong learning in its radical form for activism and social engagement.

In the second part, individual and collective activist perspectives are juxtaposed. Through the prism of a critical understanding of the system and extending the insight to issues of social capital and privilege, I demonstrate the emancipatory nature of movements that consciously use the category of citizenship to oppose and create alternatives.

In the third section, in the context of the previously mentioned citizenship and organising social movements, I diagnose the complementarity of local and global perspectives. What also follows is an attempt to compare the findings of the three selected movements with the two proposed typologies (Curley, et al., 2018; Troll & Krause, 2016), as a result of which the progressiveness of their action and their critical and global character are highlighted.

4.1. Activism as a form of lifelong learning in the 21st century

Understanding the social dimension of adult education and experiential learning gains a new perspective when we move beyond formal education and turn towards social engagement and activism. In the 21st century, formal education is still focused on its transmissive role and on the knowledge aspect, even if there are elements related to skills or attitudes. Still, all forms of its verification are about measurable testing, assessment, and codification of competences. Educational competence models have become increasingly popular in the last two decades, so we

have them politically anchored in international documents of various kinds including global competences such as “Competencies for Democratic Citizenship, Human Rights and Intercultural Understanding, Council of Europe” (Council of Europe, n.d.) or Global Competence 2018 PISA OECD (OECD, 2018). Some education policies shaped at the macro level, like the OECD Transformative Competences for 2030 (OECD, n.d.), pay attention to competences beyond formal education and its assumptions. Within the framework of transformative competences, the following areas are highlighted: creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking responsibility. However, the OECD sees their implementation primarily within the school curriculum, but no longer in adult education.

The knowledge economy is dominated by highly skilled and educated workers. Although, due to the automation of processes, the division of workers and the contemporary nature of work is defined in two dimensions: technical tasks and social perspective. Technical ones are complex and simple divided the relationship between them in different jobs, another social perspective in terms of workers' participation in the planning and execution of tasks, this is not without influence on the contemporary class structure of work (Livingstone & Guile, 2012). Adult education focuses on professionalisation and learning centred on professional development, while adult social competence is rarely part of the discussion. Education is thus at the service of the global economy, which is the knowledge economy (Finnegan & Grummell, 2020). At the national level, policies support the depoliticisation of education (Szkudlarek, 2013). Many problems that should be solved systemically have been redirected towards individual responsibility. Consequently, their solutions are seen as learning new things and personal development. The neo-liberal narrative of professional and personal development of adults oriented towards achieving success or financial well-being is linked to power and privilege and supports social inequality and the capitalist economy.

Lifelong learning as a concept has received its own critique and deconstruction and its entrenchment in European and global policies (Biesta, 2006; Fejes et al., 2018; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Gravani & Zarifis, 2014a; Guimarães & Antunes, 2014; Lima & Guimarães, 2011). The context of responding to the needs of the capitalist economy situated in the individualist perspective of the countries of the Global North contradicts

the activist actions and attitudes presented in this research project. The analysis of the political discourse around lifelong learning also takes place in the optics of the Bologna Process, which has established important benchmarks for education at the national level in the European Union.

Based on the analysis of the influence of the EU's lifelong learning policies, especially the implementation of "A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" (European Commission, 2000), researchers diagnose its obvious connection to neoliberal political discourse, and challenge the relevance of globalisation processes and the construction of authority through economic indicators in a situation of socio-economic crisis, as well as a European crisis of civic values (Gravani & Zarifis, 2014b). "The real challenge however for today's educational and learning policies in Europe does not lie with the promotion of a narrative that prioritises the needs of the market, but with the truthful delivery of a narrative that corresponds to valid learning needs of Europe's citizens" (Ibidem, p. 3). Proposed by researchers, a framework for European learning collectives whereby collective means a network in which individuals and their needs are included at different levels of social groups. The aim of this framework is learning per se, which in democratic societies brings development at both the individual and community level (Gravani & Zarifis, 2014c).

However, over the last few years a third orientation to lifelong learning has emerged – a soft version of the economic paradigm. The economic perspective is still conspicuous, and the market has a central role, but civil society and the state have entered the arena to a higher degree within policy discourse. Here, the responsibility for lifelong learning is divided between the market, state, and civil society, and the individuals' responsibility for learning is the focus (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008, p. 3).

Using an activist strategy of subversion, this time through researching and juxtaposing activism with lifelong learning, I want to reclaim this comparison with the notion of lifelong learning and its social dimension for important current social issues. This subversion aims to reclaim the democratic right to define the concept individually and collectively and to think of the process in terms of a right to education rather than an obligation in relation to a personal situation in the labour market or the economic system and personal responsibility (Biesta, 2006).

The institutionalisation of community involvement in NGOs, which often take the place of the state and look after the needs of selected groups or problems in a well-defined area (such as animal rights, accessibility for people with disabilities, cultural heritage, or tourism and recreation) or, in implementing many parallel projects, focus on achieving goals and results and raising funds for activities, and much less on social change and how to achieve it. One must give credit to NGOs that their role at the interface between formal and non-formal education is crucial, especially as they are quick to respond to changing realities and incorporate new strands into their activities such as digital education, the climate crisis or migration and refugee issues. However, they target adults much less, to whom, if they do offer their activities, it is in terms of professional development (teachers) or awareness-raising on specific issues such as responsible consumption or human rights.

Civil society organisations are not free from neoliberal practices and market mechanisms both in Poland and globally, while any alternative narratives and radical solutions to global challenges emerge primarily in social movements. Choudry and Kapoor (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010), quoting diagnoses of NGOs (McNally, 2011), undermine their efforts to negate the status quo. In their view, due to the organisations' entrenchment in the system as safety valves, their role is limited to proposing and reforming policies within the capitalist system rather than challenging its foundations and assumptions. In the Polish context of educational organisations, Paweł Rudnicki (Rudnicki, 2016a) writes about the entanglement of NGOs in the neoliberal market, which have become mainly workplaces and efficient players on the public-private sector line, often catering to both of them at a relatively low cost. One of the areas discussed was the undertaking of educational activities in response to the systemic realities (of an educational system operating within neoliberal conditions and power relations), within which the author described a kind of game on the fringes of the educational system. On the one hand, the organisations ignored its rules of security and formal subordination by relying on interpersonal relationships and responding to the real and everyday needs of teachers and educators, while on the other hand, they remained closely connected to the requirements of the core curriculum. This peculiar game with the system will be a useful context for the discussed learning in social movements.

According to McNally (McNally, 2011), social movements are politically committed against the status quo, but those from the Global North lack rootedness in the labour movement and a clear strategic vision for the future, while those from the Global South have repeatedly (as in Bolivia, Guadelupe, and Martinique or Mexico) set an example of efficiency in action and progressive demands. New social movements (Vanden et al., 2017) functioning as networks on a global scale (Castells, 2010b) often build their founding myth on grassroots organisations and stories from the Global South (Choudry et al., 2012) to emphasise their international character. Their polycentric structure and emerging branches create distinct histories and adaptations of the general pattern to local or national contexts based on current community needs. Movements are emerging in the public space that express dissent and indignation against the policies and programmes of specific parties and that feel, as in the case of climate change or human rights issues, cheated by the neoliberal system and its assumptions (Szkudlarek, 2013). Movements of the younger generation, such as the Youth Climate Strike or XR Poland, also make the process of political engagement an educational process for this generation:

“No movement for radical change begins by demanding revolution as such. Instead, world-transforming struggles emerge when oppressed people take to the streets and shut down places of work to demand a living wage, civil rights, a shorter working day, housing for all, or an end to war. It is in the course of mobilizing—in the process of reclaiming the streets, creating road blockades, occupying workplaces, deliberating in mass assemblies, creating new forms of democratic self-rule—that people gain a sense of their own power, expand their horizons, and begin to imagine that another world is truly possible.” (McNally, 2011, pp. 175–176)

We learn obedience at school and at work, whereas activism is outside the system and gives the opportunity to express our identity through dissent, resistance, and disobedience. Identification with activism as a social and political phenomenon is relatively new in Poland. Many people who are active in social movements on an individual level scale their involvement and assess how much of an activist they are and to what extent. However, it is through activism that educational social change is taking place among adults on an individual and group level and in a holistic aspect (knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and ethical beliefs). The very notion of activism has returned to the Polish academic literature in the last decade after many years

(Bilon, 2019; Bilon-Piórko, 2022; Kubicki, 2017), when burdened with connotations of party activism or environmental activism (consisting, according to popular opinion, mainly in tying oneself to trees) was on the margins of social reflections, but also increasingly appears in narratives displacing volunteering or social activism. The return of activism in the context of social movements is a result of emerging urban movements and their representatives combining social, civic, and political roles (such as the initiatives emerging across Europe under the slogan “The City Is Ours”).

According to Choudry (Choudry, 2015), activism can therefore be learned in two dimensions. The first is individual and concerns personal development, the formation of values and attitudes within and at the service of capitalist society. Individuals then take responsibility for this process and the system is, as it were, absolved of it. The second one, which is also much more important for this research project, is the emancipatory dimension, which uses critical analysis and builds a democratic relationship giving possibly equal and open access to the learning process. By identifying problems such as inequalities in access to education, social exclusion or discrimination and injustice, it aims to change the world according to its rules and values. Although I note both dimensions in the study, in the collective understanding I focus much more on the emancipatory role of learning within social movements.

Activist learning, then, is a process towards systemic change that takes place in resistance to the system, but often using its tools and subversively exploiting them for its own ends. Some activists speak openly about using knowledge and familiarity with the mechanisms of the system to work for the common good and believe, unlike McNally (McNally, 2011), that this knowledge of the market rules of the game makes social movements more effective and informed. For historical and economic reasons, social movements are no longer based on the working class, but rather a new generation of activists

Nyeleni Poland, XR Poland, and Akcja Demokracja, based on social learning and its dimensions such as action, reflection, communication, and negotiation, significantly extend and transcend this notion by reinforcing the perception of power relations as crucial and create space for its reduction inside the movement while clashing with it in the outside world. Each of Wildemeersch's dimensions of social

learning (Wildemeersch, 1999) are actually a separate parallel process in the education and development of the chosen social movements and contain separate components of learning through experiences of collective engagement for a cause.

Social learning, in terms of the actions taken, focuses on their communality and presents a broad catalogue of both online and offline activities undertaken. Some forms of action like online petitions, in the case of Akcja Demokracja, or civil disobedience, in the case of XR Poland, are even actions that characterise a movement and fund their history. Each action at the individual level requires specific skills, sometimes also knowledge, but above all an active and committed attitude on the part of each activist. It also requires group consensus, creativity, and coordination of tasks around each action. Being active in the public space and the visibility of movements in it is one aspect of activism, but a large part of taking action also happens inside the structures of each movement and concerns building its organisational culture. This means that the dimension of public activism of social movements is more complex than the manifestation of disagreement or support on specific issues, but also implies processes of learning, the formation of new norms, language, and tools for cooperation within. Although, in terms of taking action, the social movements studied have their successes, they are still not mass actions in the public space (the most numerous in the form of demonstrations belong to Akcja Demokracja), and the achievement of the goals of change are far away. Therefore, one can venture to say that social movements are learning how to function in public space through the successive actions implemented. However, the answer to the question of how is not closely linked to how to get the best possible results, i.e., to the category of efficiency and achievement of goals. Much more important from the activists' perspective is the individual involvement of people, and the visibility in the public space of their demands, even if not yet realised. Drawing attention to issues addressed by movements, such as the climate catastrophe, human rights, democracy, or social justice, is a value in itself. In this respect, it is also worth distinguishing actions based on understanding one's civil rights and acting on the spur of the moment, for example in demonstrations like Akcja Demokracja or civil disobedience actions like XR Poland.

In the reflexivity dimension, the social movements studied present a very high level of critical reflection at all levels of functioning. Be it in relation to the neoliberal system, politics at the national, European, or global level, and in disagreement and

resistance to them, especially in terms of food production or ignoring climate change, or in pointing out mechanisms of power and trying a different way of working within the movement. This is shown through democratisation, participatory nature, or implementing new structural solutions giving co-ownership and decision-making to activists, as in the case of XR Poland and their self-organised structure. Most of them learn from their actions and plan and improve the next ones on the basis of these experiences, and the sharing of reflections and conclusions is part of almost every internal meeting in each of the three movements. Deepening critical thinking skills is also a learning process for activists in spaces that are geared towards dialogue, listening to each other, and developing shared solutions, ideally based on consensus. In daily practice, these issues take up a lot of the activists' time and energy, but they are, in their view, a necessary step in the ongoing inclusion of each person in structures at the level of information, analysis, and decisions. It is worth pointing out the role of reflection and critical reflection in terms of power relations within movements and seeking solutions in the rotation of functions, following commitment and responsibility or multilateralism. This reflection is also about noticing the challenges of long-distance activist engagement, such as burnout, and trying to counter it by promoting a regenerative culture and spaces where wellbeing is nurtured. Historically, never before in Polish social or civic action has this issue been present and integrated into the culture of the organisation. Perhaps this is the reason why the implementation of such solutions at the structural level is still prototypical, because there are habits cultivated by systemic solutions and activist or community experiences from other spaces, where the priority was to act as if ignoring any symptoms of fatigue or overwork, because the issue was the most important.

Multilateral communication is a personal dimension of social learning, but it somehow stems from the participatory and democratic assumptions of all three movements. Akcja Demokracja conducts its communication with the movement through consultation and joint action. Nyeleni Poland has its own communication channels, but also as an ephemeral movement creates task forces, thematic groups, and organises communication spaces around them, while XR Poland, through online and offline tools, unites activists in circles that communicate key findings to each other and make decisions within the mandates they outline. Communicating openly according to established rules, ensuring gender-sensitive and diversity-sensitive

language, and using non-violent communication guidelines are other important communication skills that activists need to acquire when joining social movements. To function in spaces of dialogue, where it is desirable to express opinions, to put forward one's own ideas or to co-determine the direction of the movement is also to take responsibility in communication. The level of action for their course of action, as well as for others in the movement, this requires specific skills and openness towards the communication process. This is another process that requires learning and attentiveness, and sometimes a change of previous communication habits learned at school or work.

Finally, the last dimension of social learning, namely negotiation, which Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch, 1999) situates more in the relationship between community and opponents/the world outside than in the area inside the movement and between activists. High tensions and disagreements with the status quo and the way in which politics and practice are implemented around the topics most important to movements are part of this area. However, within the study of movements that focused on their internal learning practices, the negotiation of values and shared views and opinions around key issues for the movement, and also other civic or social issues that are in the optics of the group's interests, proved to be an important aspect. Difference, disagreement, and conflict are part and parcel of the group process and the coexistence of people in the movement, but working with them, finding tools and methods to work with them, and an attitude of willingness to take on difficult and uncomfortable issues are further elements in the learning process. This area already becomes crucial when activists join movements, with their low-entry thresholds, i.e., high openness and egalitarianism, as well as clear rules for working together to the best of one's ability while agreeing to the values and demands presented by the movement. Negotiating to agree and have a common understanding of the values and specific goals that the movement wants to achieve, as well as the organisational culture in practice, is a high threshold for entry into the movement, which requires discussion, reflection, and negotiation on an individual and intra-group level. The study demonstrates that the social movements studied are in a constant process of internal negotiation between activists (those already active as well as newcomers) and the outside world, to which they narrate their structure, culture, and model of action, which stands in contrast to

those operating systemically and presents an alternative model of functioning in the public space.

Learning activism (Choudry, 2015) is an informal process built on social learning (Wildemeersch, 2014), extending it to critically understand power relations, both outside (in the system) and inside the movement, and to form attitudes of respect for diversity and social responsibility. This category designed is for young adults and adults, but also includes younger generations who, although not part of this study, like the Youth Climate Strike, appeared in its optics. The search for holistic education in social movements is also linked to the crisis of formal education in many countries, including the COVID-19 pandemic (*Edukacja w Czasach Pandemii Wirusa COVID-19. Z Dystansem o Tym, Co Robimy Obecnie Jako Nauczyciele.*, 2020) and the reduced investment in or privatisation of education. In the study, the only movement that consciously focuses on education is Nyeleni Poland, which declares its direction in three areas: education, advocacy, and networking. However, both XR Poland and Akcja Demokracja devote a lot of their activities to broadening the civic and political consciousness of their activists by creating new channels, ways, and spaces where a continuous educational process happens, most often on an informal level. Methods based on experiential work through practical action and reflection show the next challenges that face the movement within, but also influence the construction of the movement's identity and its position in the public sphere, though this direction is not always strengthening development as in the case of XR Poland.

Learning activism is an alternative proposal to the status quo and outcome and results-based education, geared towards individual and collective change and, in the long term, focuses on systemic change for the whole world on the issues of climate catastrophe, food sovereignty, democracy, and human rights, with a critical social justice optic (Bailey, 2017). These are parallel processes that, in the movements studied, support and intersect whether at the national or global level, and the movements are not in a vacuum but in a network (Castells, 2010b, 2015) and draw on each other's experiences as well as each other's resources. Although, in terms of practice, they take different actions and use different tools, from newsletters and online petitions to civil disobedience, the values around which they are gathered and the consistency with which they expose systemic mechanisms and propose solutions is why, according to one interlocutor, I can call this learning model forming activism.

The immeasurable effect of forming activism is to build the group consciousness and identity of individuals and groups civically committed to changing the world towards progressive and even radical systemic change, creating niches for collaboration, information-sharing networks, and interpersonal relationships around critical social justice.

Activism in selected social movements is thus an implementation of Brookfield and Holst's concept of radical adult education (Brookfield & Holst, 2011) in which activists as learning agents simultaneously make social change. Through action, i.e., operationally/technically, through external and internal communication, and through a process of emancipation, radical adult learning creates and expands political and economic democracy with the aim of redressing inequalities through access to financial resources, education, health care and work, but also by promoting collective communities, like social movements, as alternative forms of cooperation. Nyeleni Poland, XR Poland, and Akcja Demokracja as movements and their activists create opportunities to learn social change in a democratic, equal, and diverse community, which they base on collaborative analyses of adult experiences, where they have equal roles of people learning from each other. Emphasising the informal nature of this process and its identity (individual and community) dimension, I postulate that activism is a critical/radical form of lifelong learning.

I am, at the same time, responding to Gert Biesta's (Biesta, 2006) call in his text to reclaim the democratic and public dimension of this notion appropriated by policies individualising the experience of learning and development. I aim at a subversive takeover of this notion for progressive social change and collective experience mainly of young adults, but also developing between generations. In contrast, following Biesta's critique, for learning focused on the neoliberal market and economic value, I propose to use the phrase learning economy or learning for earning (Ibidem).

4.2. Individuals versus collective: role of social capital & privilege in collective learning and regenerative culture in individual struggle

Using one's civil rights and individual privileged status as tools for progressive or radical (because it is gradable in the movements studied) social change in favour of issues that are marginalised in public and political debate is, in a sense, the realisation of the emancipatory learning dimension of activism that Choudry (Choudry, 2015) wrote about. As a group, activists engage with an issue that is marginalised in public space and discourse, but their status as individual activists is privileged from a social and economic perspective, as well as having the high professional-level competencies and social capital (Alheit, 2009; Chimiak, 2022; Livingstone & Guile, 2012) to develop and use them within activism. According to McNally (McNally, 2011), movements are formed by people from a similar living social group that form a dynamic, complex formation full of contradictions and tensions, but sharing aspirations and experiences with each other.

The critical perspective presented by activists is usually about the system, politics, and policy makers, but often also about other organisations and movements working in a similar area. The intermingling of activists between movements is more natural on an individual level than building coalitions between collectives. Learning activism thus has an individual dimension emancipating individuals to self-consciously decide the direction of their activist actions and aspirations (Choudry, 2015), both creating new communities and emerging from those already defined. It is, however, a reinforcement of individuals belonging to an already socially privileged group, who gain further competences and empower themselves. Although research on social engagement in Poland (*Kondycja Organizacji Pozarządowych 2018*, 2019) has sounded the alarm about declining engagement in volunteering or paid work in NGOs and an increasing numbers of people are leaving the third sector due to a lack of funding and activist burnout (Besta et al., 2019; Pigni, 2016).

At the same time, the last decade has seen the emergence of analyses such as that of Aleksandra Bilewicz (Bilewicz, 2015), which links interest in informal social activity with intellectual attitudes and the characteristics of an intelligentsia lifestyle, understood by the author as higher, usually humanistic, education and coming from intelligentsia families involved socially in previous generations (Zarycki & Warczok,

2014). He also sees in social action a tension between the democratic approach and elitism, and a specific kind of informal missionality and sharing of ethical values between group members. This tension at the level of group identity is also recognised from the perspective of this research project in terms of the agreement of principles and values and the internal linguistic codes or culture of the organisation, which are intended to make the movement more accessible and open, and in effect raise the threshold for entry and participation. Due to the adoption of a critical and adult learning perspective in the study, the biographical threads were not developed enough in the material to assess whether Bilewicz's thesis (Bilewicz, 2015) is applicable here, but this could be a valuable guideline for continuing research in this area.

From an individual perspective, activists from a privileged social group, by engaging within their high competence and resources, consolidate their position in the social hierarchy and widen the distance that separates them from the excluded group, and although they themselves, by virtue of their interests, are still in the minority and deal with unpopular topics in the public debate, they are much closer to building an intelligentsia ethos than becoming the voice of socially excluded groups that have never been heard before. While activists gain by their action in the social and activist hierarchy, it is worth noting that in an internal structure devoid of hierarchy with a democratic approach and network construction (Castells, 2015), they do not play as important leadership roles as outside the movement, where their activist involvement is an important part of their biography and sometimes even creates a kind of activist history or even mythologises activism.

From the collective perspective of social movements, one can also see a shift in emphasis between the goal-orientation and efficiency above all else, including the wellbeing, private life, and even health of activists, taken from the neoliberal discourse, and the regenerative culture increasingly discussed and implemented in organisations. Activists' narratives included references to categories such as multi-leadership, but also metaphors of relay or marathons, as well as declarations of moving away from a toxic system and not replicating mechanisms that successfully reinforce the system (*About Us*, n.d.; Nyeleni Europe & Central Asia, n.d.). Previously, activists who sacrificed too much in the name of a cause burned out, lost enthusiasm and energy, and left the organisation or movement (Besta et al., 2019). A kind of exploitation in social organisations and movements, groups that constantly struggle with scarcity and

are exposed to social misunderstanding and evaluation, was a common phenomenon, which, however, had never been discussed before because, apart from the biographical consequences, it had no economic or legal consequences.

Regeneration culture notes this issue and treats it systemically rather than individually. It shows that at the core of its stance is the diagnosis of multiple deficits related to low- or no-pay work, the emotional burden of expectations and pressure to address multiple issues, the lack of results despite the actions taken, and often frustration due to the lack of mass effect, commitment to the cause, personal emotions and sensitivities in relation to the topics that activists take up (such as climate anxiety and depression). Activism, especially that working with an element of one's own identity in the public sphere, puts one at risk of burnout, and working for one's wellbeing and against burnout translates into longer and more stable action.

However, regeneration culture is in a prototypical stage in movements, with some of the interlocutors either having experienced burnout already or, noting moments of difficulty in their activist experience, even sharing reflections on how, on a personal level, they have tried to care for themselves. The idea of collective care and caring among activists has become an important community value. Creating within movements a culture of empathetic listening or dialogue and trust without a superior moral or political tone from a position of experience or privilege is key to a community based on "a genuine sense of trust" as bell hooks calls it (hooks, 2003, p. 109).

Implementing a regenerative culture and changing the way we think about the way we act brings movements closer to their values, such as diversity or respect, but also shows how to create alternatives to the system and look for another way to achieve their goals. Rebellion as an anthropological category is political, identity-based and concerned with what is public, and its form is public manifestation (Szczygieł, 2022). However, dissent or rebellion is also an important element in communication because it initiates revolution (Freire, 2000, 2014; Horton & Freire, 1990) and is a reaction to power (Brookfield, 2005; Brookfield & Holst, 2011), but it also opens up the possibility of dialogue because it shows different points of view (Koczanowicz, 2015). While externally the narratives and actions are associated with struggle, resistance, and disobedience, often with strong expressive language, internally the movement's construction of a democratic, safe, but also courageous, space for collaboration

constitutes the group identity of social movements. Regenerative culture is an internal manifestation of dissent from the status quo and an example of organisational change that shows that selected social movements resist the exploitation of activists, their actions, energy, resources, or creativity at the price of getting closer to achieving their goal. This is not to say that in the practice of action such situations no longer occur. Activists are sometimes tired and burnt out, but systemically paying attention to this issue is a significant social change and deconstructs internal symbolic power relations, when socially and collectively important goals and the degree to which they are achieved are more important than individuals, their psychological state, or their well-being.

In this respect, all three social movements selected for this study according to Troll & Krause's typology (Troll & Krause, 2016) present a new culture where values, frames, and world views of well-being, sufficiency, and global solidarity are the most important guidelines. The type of radical new humanity in the midst of global grassroots movements is constantly asking itself what kind of community we as a people want to create, and it also responds by its example and the way it acts. The answer for Akcja Demokracja will be a civically engaged, progressive, and democratic society; for Nyeleni Poland a globally just and respectful society that respects human rights, including the right to food and land; and for XR Poland a society that actively counters and adapts to climate catastrophe in the spirit of equality and social justice for the future of the world. At the intersection of individual and collective change, groups, movements, and networks are forming which empower each other and aspire to create new organisational cultures based on values and perhaps even foundations for a new system.

4.3. Overcoming local – global division in critical global citizenship

Social movements and engagement with them is based on a consciousness and reflection centred on citizenship understood as categories of rights and freedoms and opening it up to global and local perspectives at the same time. Understanding citizenship as a status, but also as a democratic and active practice (Wildemeersch, 2014; Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele, 2010a), it becomes all the more important to embed it in activism, outside formal structures or on its explicit margins, even within

the field of civil society organisations. This positioning is important because it is social movements that not only advocate outwardly for radical change, but with their democratic structure, engagement, reflection, and equalitarian approach create alternatives to the status quo in line with critical social justice (Bailey, 2017).

“This thinking, and the education that shapes it - education against poverty, towards solidarity - should be global. For we have mentioned the global nature of social problems today and the need for just such a globally organised solution to them, in line with Zygmunt Bauman's opinion: "Our present woes and problems, in all their varieties and shades, have a global characteristics and require global responsibilities".” (Boryczko et al., 2016, pp. 158–159)

Opening up both citizenship and adult education, understood for the purposes of this project as progressive/radical lifelong learning, to a transnational perspective is one social possibility that brings both challenges and solutions. Together with a critical perspective of the neoliberal system and globalisation itself seeing the interdependencies and mechanisms going beyond local and national thinking is a possible answer to identifying problems and solutions on the right scale and undermining connections and influences. It is visible in the way of all three social movements. For example, Nyeleni Poland through food sovereignty which on the local scale of agroecology still struggles with global trends in agriculture and farming and a globalised market with a long supply chain, where price and performance are the main factors of success. Understanding climate catastrophe as global issues which determines the situation of humans and the environment also on the national and local levels, where the solutions also need to be developed and commitments entered into force. What is also emphasised by XR as a network is that, without global solidarity, combating climate change will be ineffective and overdue. Finally, universalising critique of the authoritarian shift in Poland and other European countries and promoting a progressive and democratic society empowering citizens as an alternative to the status quo.

At the individual level, the climate crisis was one of the most frequently cited reasons that led interlocutors to engage in activism. They saw their local or national actions as a contribution to the global struggle and as a dimension of their conscious citizenship, or civic duties.

All three movements also overcame national-thinking in their structure and global network that they all are parts of, but through adaptation to the national and local context, seeing it on a continuum between knowledge-based movements, value orientation, and political activism. The flexible and collective way of communication and reflection is to build narratives on the issues addressing all three dimensions (local, national, and global) and move smoothly between them showing the consequences on each one. Progressive and radical social movements interrupt the everyday rhythm and create spaces of open-ended dialogue, where sharp divisions, templates, and samples are no longer valid (Castells, 2015) and where courage and hope provoke new ways of thinking which interrupt and disagree with existing ones.

This applies both to functioning in the Troll and Krause (Troll & Krause, 2016) typology of radical new humanity exploring mostly the worldwide view and contextualising it in other dimensions. This includes seeing the unlearning process inside the movements' structure not only by overcoming power relations, but also by scaling up their activities, principles, and ideas from the local to the global in both directions, considering the local in the global and the global in the local context and devaluating all privileges hidden in this structure where knowledge and understanding of the broader perspective appears. Unlearning divisions as a collective experience also shifts social movements, which become a global community of critical and informed citizens (Curley, et al., 2018) by bringing the perspective of grassroots, local traditions and recognising the spiritual dimension of land, a relationship with the environment, and a critical approach to existing democratic structures, including civil disobedience. Most of the strategies and tactics implemented by the selected social movements are subversive and are overcoming existing hierarchies and structures to create alternatives or the foundations of the new system. This alternative thinking and acting has a lot in common with critical global citizenship understood in a collective way by activists. Decolonising pedagogy is the model presented by Nyeleni Poland and its deep expression of the right to land and food and open criticality of the neoliberal global market and globalised food chains, where the overcoming of the local and global division is the most visible, but also the structure which is non-institutionalised and ephemeral, where engagement and participation give you place and space inside. For both XR Poland and Akcja Demokracja, recognition of diverse perspectives and possible alternatives is essential, both also understand the role of

power relations in their structure, but consider much less their individual privilege as activists and their high social capital which stand on the side of power and the dominated structure. Affirming diversity inside the movement doesn't challenge the hidden power relation structure and their privilege, especially in the case of professional activism during working hours (in the case of Akcja Demokracja core team). So, both XR and Akcja Demokracja are recognised as the relativist-pluralist-neoliberal multiculturalist model in the typology by Curley and others (Ibidem).

Conclusions

In this chapter, I summarise the main themes and issues raised in the previous sections of the thesis by answering the research questions, as well as identifying issues and raising questions that stay with me and that may contribute to the next research project.

The three in-depth questions contribute specific aspects to the answer to the core question, but below I will formulate the answers to each of them separately, also indicating the specific chapters in the text where I address these aspects in detail, either in the analysis of the research material or in the main findings and dilemmas.

Starting from one out of three questions: In which ways do activists create and support learning contexts in the social movements? Activists are learning to change the world according to their collectively agreed principles and priorities, but also in the spirit of a regenerative culture aware of their privilege to become involved in issues that are important to them. The change they propose is to start from a process that is not exploitative and does not seek efficiency to achieve goals at any cost. The struggle for a better world takes place in an atmosphere of sustainable activism and shared concern for the wellbeing of activists. Those involved learn how to take care of themselves in this effort, so that they can function in it in the long term, but also to take care of their own emotions and boundaries.

Activists recognise many aspects of their civic learning and engagement, and in this thesis I have analysed them from the perspective of social learning and its dimensions (action, reflection, communication, and negotiation). Each of these required separate analyses, but only taken together they contribute to the learning process of activism that results in change at the identity level. Individual-level transformation in all these dimensions is an important contribution to the social change designed by the movement at the collective level.

Social change is defined by each movement separately within their demands. Nevertheless, what they have in common is a desire to raise awareness around important issues like climate catastrophe, human rights, the right to food, democracy, or freedom, i.e., critical social justice. This awareness is not geographically divided into local and global, but at the same time sees both perspectives as complementary

and does not lose sight of them in concrete actions in the public space. The change, therefore, lies in the fusion of the local and global perspectives, which hitherto operated separately, and the seamless transition between them at the level of identifying problems or proposing solutions.

Moving to the second question: What does activist participation in social movements mean for their learning? Activists learn to define and clarify social change through democratic, participatory processes and internal consultations enabled by the structure of social movements, which are networks with multiple centres, unmasking mechanisms of power and changing individual to collective perspectives. These processes take time, commitment, and new forms of communication, but they are at the heart of the organisation of movements. Communicating and negotiating one's values so that they are shared, at least on those most salient issues for the movement as a whole, while at the same time supporting a process that is itself not judgmental and shaming for those who join the groups, is an important issue and a high threshold for entry into activist engagement, which is also not possible for everyone because of differences in social capital.

The experience of being involved in social movements is also undoubtedly an individual experience and, for many of the interlocutors, an important part of their biography, as they also noticed their personal change in many aspects from changing interests and social groups through changes in habits, such as greater consumer awareness, but also being critical of systemic mechanisms in the professional sphere as well and having the courage to initiate change, if only in their workplaces.

The third question I'm going to answer is: What do activists and their learning contribute to reaching the aims of social movements? As one of the activists said during a meeting, which was a part of engaged observation while collecting data: *Don't expect to harvest tomatoes if you have planted peppers* (Memo_XR_PL_14_01_2021). This metaphorically demonstrates how individual reflection and attitude influences the whole group effects what, as a movement, they can achieve. In practice, this means that at every level of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, activists build themselves and their commitment into a movement and make up the social change they collectively propose (see more in chapter 3.1).

Social movements are communities that use activists' skills and acquire new ones to shape their values and present the attitudes activists want to see in a changing world but are also themselves the change. This cohesion is built on an awareness of one's civil rights and one's social status while critically perceiving and transcending them. The goal of this change on an individual and collective level is therefore a critical global citizenship (V. O. de Andreotti, 2014; Mansouri et al., 2017; O'Byrne, 2003) that combines the above aspects into a single concept of seeing the world and actively participating in it, as people who have the agency to challenge the status quo and express dissent, resistance, or rebellion.

At this stage of the development of the three social movements, it is not easy to say how designed social change will be achieved and if any results have already been observed to change the political and social system to be more progressive, fair, just, and equal. Still, most important is their consistency in engaging and creating alternative learning contexts in activism and social engagement, as well as creating spaces where operating according to the new principles is possible on a micro scale, which can contribute to broadening the perspective on the macro scale.

Finally, answering the basic research question: What and how do activists learn to change a global world within the social movements? All three above-mentioned answers contribute to this one to a certain extent. However, I will formulate a general response that will be a kind of summary of the previous ones and will cover all three important dimensions of this research project.

The aim of activist action is to change the world to become one that is more just, critical of power relations, and guided by values such as the common good or equality and diversity. Among the many demands is systemic change, and the foundations for this change are laid by activists proposing alternative solutions within movement structures to the most pressing issues related to the neoliberal system (read more in chapter 3.2) and the commodification of many processes and values, including knowledge or experience (read more in chapter 3.1).

Activists learn to change the world through activism understood in the context of holistic learning (chapter 3.1) as well as value-based critiques and resistance to the status quo (chapter 3.2). The social learning of activism is a multidimensional process that involves both the perspective of individual development and transformation through action and experience, and the building of a community on mutually accepted

principles (chapter 3.3). A social movement draws on the resources and social status of activists, but also supports its alternative structure, if only through a culture of regeneration, democratisation, and inclusivity, the pursuit of movement-designed social change (chapter 4.2). Activists change the world by learning activism as a radical form of lifelong learning both as an individual and community experience (chapter 4.1). Activists operate from a global perspective, with a critical awareness and willingness to challenge at a global level, thus breaking down the dichotomy of global and local (chapter 3.4). Activism is thus a manifestation of active and critical global citizenship, and as a result of this awareness, global world change becomes possible within the created alternative learning contexts in progressive and critical social movements (chapter 4.3).

Social learning as a theoretical framework organised this research project and is treated in it in a cross-cutting manner both in terms of data analysis and in terms of conclusions and dilemmas. The dimensions of social learning outlined by Wildemeersch (Wildemeersch, 1999, 2014) allowed research categories to emerge that went beyond simply comparing social movements and their practices in public spaces. At the same time, social learning in this research project took on a broader scope in terms of both the learning activism (Choudry, 2015) and the overall goal of this process, which in this study was defined as the learning of critical global citizenship.

What was surprising during this research project, is that theorising mainly associated with the field of research is also present in the activist world and often supports its activities through reflection on a meta-level, but also critical analysis skills. The combination of critical academic theorising and activist practice opens up a wider field of analysis, but also offers the possibility of building collective resistance in the struggle for a better world. Intensifying this collaboration in the future has the potential to tip the scales towards unmasking and aligning power relations and, in the longer term, systemic change.

This research project was led by three titles among a long bibliography: “We Make the Road by Walking” (Horton & Freire, 1990), “We Make Our Own History” (Cox & Nilsen, 2014), and “Hope in the Dark” (Solnit, 2019). All three gave prominence to engagement, social movements and, ultimately, activists by showing the importance of gathering experiences, combining perspectives, having the courage to act, but also collective care and hope that the world can be a more just place for all

people. I found these themes particularly important as a citizen-researcher, but also for the engaged and critical perspective that resonated in this text. Activism is hard social work that requires parallel learning, organising, and acting on one's values, so it is worth seeing it not as a social fringe but as a radical form of lifelong learning.

What proved disappointing during this research project was the disparity between the interest on the part of activists in the research and the situation in academia where there is relatively little interest in activism at the university level. Many stereotypes about researchers persist in socially engaged groups, which we were able to challenge and sometimes even completely invalidate through personal accounts. While the topic has attracted interest at a theoretical level during academic presentations, few researchers have been close to the practical aspect of this activity. This only strengthened my conviction of the value of my role as citizen-researcher.

To continue this research around social activism in an engaged and critical way is my idea for future projects if I take the trouble to pursue it academically. An interesting thread at the moment is the development of new social movements being researched and the question of whether they will one day reach the general public and to what extent. An important thread only hinted at in this study is the intersectionality of social movements and the fostering of close values and demands between each other while people connect and flow between them, but also an all-encompassing rebellion against reality. This broad perspective of the joint functioning of movements, as well as of activists themselves in different groups, and the willingness and openness to change in an effort to create the best place for activist action is another important topic on the horizon of social change that still remains not fully covered in Polish pedagogical research.

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Annex 1

List of empirical materials that were coded in the research project generated from Atlas.ti 8 program divided by types (interviews, photos, films, researcher memos and social media & communication channels).

Transcriptions of interviews (15):

Interview_1_XR dated on 4/04/2020
Interview_2_XR dated on 12/02/2020
Interview_3_XR dated on 25/03/2020
Interview_4_XR dated on 20/03/2020
Interview_5_XR dated on 1/04/2020
Interview_6_XR dated on 1/04/2020
Interview_7_XR dated on 4/04/2020
Interview_8_XR dated on 9/04/2020
Interview_9_XR dated on 21/03/2020
Interview_10_Nyeleni_PL dated on 12/12/2020
Interview_11_Nyeleni_PL dated on 18/02/2021
Interview_12_Nyeleni_PL dated on 7/12/2020
Interview_13_AD dated on 22/03/2021
Interview_14_AD dated on 29/03/2021
Interview_15_AD dated on 16/03/2021

Extracts from the interviews are quoted in the work as statements by interlocutors (ILs) with a specific number, but without attribution to a movement, in order to go beyond the assumption of a comparative study of the practices of each social movement.

Photos (220):

Akcja Demokracja photos (10):

AD_CETA, AD_CETA_1, AD_DEMO_ABO, AD_demo_online, AD_Duda_wegiel,
AD_łańcuch_POZ, AD_łańcuch_WAW, AD_mural, AD_praworzadnosc, AD_zostanie

Nyeleni_PL photos from the Second Forum for Food Sovereignty (160):

1L5A4309, 1L5A4310, 1L5A4311, 1L5A4313, 1L5A4315, 1L5A4322, 1L5A4324,
1L5A4326, 1L5A4327, 1L5A4328, 1L5A4329, 1L5A4330, 1L5A4332, 1L5A4335,
1L5A4337, 1L5A4338, 1L5A4341, 1L5A4343, 1L5A4345, 1L5A4346, 1L5A4347,
1L5A4350, 1L5A4352, 1L5A4353, 1L5A4354, 1L5A4355, 1L5A4356, 1L5A4358,
1L5A4359, 1L5A4361, 1L5A4366, 1L5A4367, 1L5A4369, 1L5A4372, 1L5A4373,

1L5A4375, 1L5A4376, 1L5A4378, 1L5A4379, 1L5A4382, 1L5A4383, 1L5A4385,
1L5A4386, 1L5A4387, 1L5A4389, 1L5A4391, 1L5A4392, 1L5A4393, 1L5A4395,
1L5A4396, 1L5A4397, 1L5A4400, 1L5A4402, 1L5A4403, 1L5A4404, 1L5A4405,
1L5A4407, 1L5A4410, 1L5A4412, 1L5A4413, 1L5A4416, 1L5A4418, 1L5A4420,
1L5A4421, 1L5A4426, 1L5A4427, 1L5A44, 1L5A4431, 1L5A4433, 1L5A4438, 1L5A4440,
1L5A4441, 1L5A4442, 1L5A4443, 1L5A4444, 1L5A4445, 1L5A4448, 1L5A4450,
1L5A4453, 1L5A4454, 1L5A4455, 1L5A4456, 1L5A4457, 1L5A4459, 1L5A4461,
1L5A4462, 1L5A4463, 1L5A4466, 1L5A4469, 1L5A4471, 1L5A4472, 1L5A4473,
1L5A4474, 1L5A4475, 1L5A4476, 1L5A4477, 1L5A4478, 1L5A4479, 1L5A4480,
1L5A4482, 1L5A4484, 1L5A4486, 1L5A4487, 1L5A4489, 1L5A4490, 1L5A4493,
1L5A4494, 1L5A4495, 1L5A4497, 1L5A4498, 1L5A4499, 1L5A4500, 1L5A4501,
1L5A4502, 1L5A4503, 1L5A4504, 1L5A4506, 1L5A4507, 1L5A4508, 1L5A4509,
1L5A4510, 1L5A4511, 1L5A4512, 1L5A4514, 1L5A4521, 1L5A4522, 1L5A4523,
1L5A4524, 1L5A4529, 1L5A4530, 1L5A4531, 1L5A4534, 1L5A4537, 1L5A4539,
1L5A4540, 1L5A4541, 1L5A4543, 1L5A4544, 1L5A4546, 1L5A4550, 1L5A4558,
1L5A4559, 1L5A4562, 1L5A4565, 1L5A4571, 1L5A4572, 1L5A4573, 1L5A4574,
1L5A4586, 1L5A4597, 1L5A4612, 1L5A45619, DSCN6600, IMG_20200131_140429,
IMG_20200131_140459, IMG_20200131_140636, IMG_20200131_145607,
IMG_20200201_143933, IMG_20200201_160238, IMG_20200202_121836

Extinction Rebellion (XR) photos (50):

WAW_rondo_1, WAW_rondo_2, WAW_rondo_3, WAW_rondo_4, WAW_rondo_5,
WAW_rondo_6, WAW_rondo_7, WAW_rondo_8, WAW_rondo_9, WAW_rondo_10,
WRO_Die_in_1, WRO_Die_in_2, WRO_Die_in_3, WRO_Die_in_4, WRO_Die_in_5,
WRO_Die_in_6, WRO_krasnale_1, WRO_krasnale_2, WRO_krasnale_3, WRO_krasnale_4,
WRO_krasnale_5, WRO_krasnale_6, WRO_krasnale_7, WRO_krasnale_8,
WRO_krasnale_9, WRO_pogrzeb_1, WRO_pogrzeb_2, WRO_pogrzeb_3, WRO_pogrzeb_4,
WRO_pogrzeb_5, WRO_pogrzeb_6, WRO_pogrzeb_7, WRO_pogrzeb_8, WRO_pogrzeb_9,
WRO_pogrzeb_10, WRO_pogrzeb_11, WRO_szubienice_1, WRO_szubienice_2,
WRO_szubienice_3, WRO_szubienice_4, WRO_szubienice_5, WRO_szubienice_6,
WRO_szubienice_7, XR_wigilia_2050_1, XR_wigilia_2050_2, XR_wigilia_2050_3,
XR_wigilia_2050_4, XR_wigilia_2050_5, XR_wigilia_2050_6, XR_wigilia_2050_7

Films, streaming and clips (24):

AD_fb_streaming: happening outside the Supreme Court building in Warsaw after the verdict of the Court of Justice of the European Union regarding changes in the Polish judiciary date 20/11/2019, link: https://fb.watch/eDBvRrHw_B/ [access date 11/07/2022]

AD_fb_streaming: Passage of Shame happening organised in connection with the Constitutional Court ruling on the right to abortion (name & shame campaign) dated on 28/10/2020, link: <https://fb.watch/eDBiUx1rlb/> [access date 11/07/2022]

AD_fb_interview: interview with Łukasz/Syriusz - Extinction Rebellion activist about yesterday's climate protests and commentary on the ongoing European Council summit dated on 10/12/2020, link: https://fb.watch/eDBs9UI_Qw/ [access date 11/07/2022]

AD_fb_clip_presidential_election: A 500m2 banner with the slogan DUDA = COAL, DUST, FALL unfurled in one of Warsaw's squares by Action Democracy three days before Sunday's vote in the 2020 presidential election dated on 9/07/2020, link: <https://fb.watch/eDBRkNynyT/> [access date 11/07/2022]

AD_fb_film_Bodnar: video summarising the term of office of the Ombudsman Adam Bodnar with thanks from civil society organisations and social movements in Poland dated on 7/02/2021, link: <https://fb.watch/eDBN4v3LQW/> [access date 11/07/2022]

AD_fb_streaming: press conference on reproductive women's rights in Poland & presentation of the billboard in city centre dated on 8/03/2021, link: <https://fb.watch/eDBG3l8YIY/> [access date 11/07/2022]

Short films from the Second Forum for Food Sovereignty recorded by researcher:

DSCN6561, DSCN6562, DSCN6563, DSCN6565, DSCN6616, DSCN6588, DSCN6589, DSCN6609, DSCN6610, DSCN6611, DSCN6579, DSCN6582, DSCN6603

XR Poland short clips, streamings and other films:

XR_youtube_deklaracja_rebelii dated on 4/10/2019, link: <https://youtu.be/tEDyHJCII7I> [access date 11/07/2022]

XR_youtube_pogrzeb_przyszłości_Wrocław dated on 21/08/2019, link: <https://youtu.be/mVh6U0AkBTQ> [access date 11/07/2022]

XR_youtube_nieposłuszeństwo_obywatelskie: Does a person have the right to break the law? Professor Monika Płatek for Extinction Rebellion dated on 4/10/2019, link: https://youtu.be/Y1_Rf9ecp60 [access date 11/07/2022]

XR_youtube_fala_buntu: Event coverage: All hands on deck - Rebellion 2020, Wave of Rebellion dated on 5/09/2020, link: <https://youtu.be/kJyD3ircTFw> [access date 11/07/2022]

XR_PL_fb_streaming_Roger_Hallam: online meeting with Roger Hallam, creator of XR with Polish XR activists dated on 16/02/2021, link: <https://www.facebook.com/XRPolaska/videos/550110685876464> [access date 11/07/2022]

Memos from researcher journal:

Memos_AD dated on:

22/11/2019, 27/11/2019, 9/12/2019, 7/01/2020, 5/02/2020, 18/02/2020, 24/02/2020, 8/05/2020, 5/03/2021, 15/03/2021, 30/03/2021, 17/04/2021

Memos_Nyeleni_PL dated on:

29/12/2019, 4/01/2020, 7/01/2020, 23/01/2020, 30/01/2020, 31/01/2020, 1/02/2020, 2/02/2020, 7/02/2020, 18/02/2020, 17/04/2020

Memos_XR_PL dated on:

10/03/2020, 12/03/2020, 25/03/2020, 31/03/2020, 1/04/2020, 4/04/2020, 24/04/2020, 23/06/2020, 21/09/2020, 14/01/2021, 1/02/2021, 11/02/2021, 16/02/2021

Social media & communication channels materials:

Print_screen_FB_AD_1-37

Print_screen_FB_XR_PL_1-9

Print_screen_FB_XR_Warszawa_1-17

Print_screen_FB_XR_Wroclaw_1-26

Print_screen_XR_MM_1-13

Print_screen_Messenger_with_interlocutors_1-8

Print_screen_Nyeleni_PL_newsletter_#8-13

Print_screen_Nyeleni_PL_www_1-7

Annex 2 (electronic version only)

It can be found in a separate Annex 2 file attached to this dissertation.

Annex 3

Maps of the codes for the four categories described in Chapter 3: Data analysis based on codings, groups and categories from Atlas.ti 8. The maps are not directly generated from the programme, but were created from the code book. The material was coded in Polish, the code names were translated into English for the purposes of this thesis:

Category 1: Holistic educational approach

Category 2: Value based & critical approach to status quo

Category 3: Strategies and tactics to act: learning by doing/acting, learning activism

Category 4: Global context/ perspective (interdependencies & dimension of work)





