Feminist Media Production in Europe: A Research Report

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Introduction: Feminist media in the context of new social movements

Throughout history, feminists have used media individually and collectively to inform, motivate, and mobilise political action on behalf of women, as well as to critique the structures and content of dominant media. As Linda Steiner aptly puts it, alternative feminist media suggest "a model for oppositional media" (Steiner 2000: 1331) as they document women's attempts to improve themselves and remake the world. Chris Atton champions alternative media in general as "counter hegemonic" because they challenge hegemonic structures in society "whether on an explicit political platform, or employing the kinds of indirect challenges through experimentation and the transformation of existing roles, routines, emblems and signs" (2002: 27). What makes media "alternative" to the mainstream of corporate media conglomerates are the processes of production, the content and the interpretive strategies of its audiences (Atkinson 2010: 22). Grassroots media projects "are fundamental in breaking the fear of speaking and in challenging the myth of women's silence" (Riaño 2000: 1335), the dominant metaphor used to refer to the marginal position of women in the communications industry. While challenging the absence of women's voices in public space, women media producers develop creative, analytical and literary skills within this cycle of analysis, reflection, and action. James Hamilton (2000) argues that three general principles underpin alternative media production, namely de-professionalisation, de-capitalisation, and de-institutionalisation. These three principles speak of how alternative women-led and feminist media are usually accessible to women without the necessity of professional training and expensive capital outlay, and how they take place outside of institutional or formalised settings. Alternative women-led and feminist media offer participatory forums for debate and the exchange of politically, socially and culturally engaged ideas by those who are marginalised within mainstream political debates. In her book *Changing the Wor(l)d: Discourse, Politics and the Feminist Movement* (1997), Stacey Young conceptualises feminist publishing as discursive politics and activism. Starting from a thesis that enduring social change is possible according to

changes in people's awareness of their situations and their prospects for change, she argues that "progressive changes in consciousness come about through discourses that challenge oppressive constructions of social phenomena" and that language acts, such as publishing, "can play a crucial part in bringing about individual and collective social change" (ibid. 25).

Taking this theoretical framework and research findings as a starting point for our empirical study, we will explore the following questions: So how does a younger generation of feminist media producers in Europe participate in society by producing print magazines, weblogs ("blogs") and electronic magazines ("e-zines") in grassroots, alternative contexts relating to "new social movements"? How do they engage in discourses on feminism(s), challenge the status quo and effect social change? In this article we will suggest a few answers to these questions. We will refer to the empirical data collected throughout the "Feminist Media Production in Europe" research project, which was affiliated with the Department of Communication at the University of Salzburg from 2008 to 2012[1]. Drawing upon theories of alternative and activist media as well theories on new social movements (NSMs), we understand alternative feminist media projects as part of and contributions to "new social movements".

"New social movements" emerged in the late 1960s and marked "an important cultural shift away from the hierarchical social relations and bureaucratic control structure of industrialism, and toward a new 'postindustrial' or 'programmed' society built on the foundations of networked information technologies, media culture, and an emerging class of highly educated, creative 'knowledge workers'" (Lievrouw 2011: 46). Suzanne Staggenborg (1995) has identified three main outcomes of social movements, namely political and policy outcomes, mobilization outcomes and cultural outcomes. Whereas changes in policies and practices, and the creation and sustaining of organizations are the more visible successes of social movements, cultural change is perhaps the longest-lasting form of social change. In the context of feminist media production, the cultural outcomes are of special interest because they "include changes in social norms, behaviours, and ways of thinking among a public that extends beyond movement constituents or beneficiaries, as well as the creation of a collective consciousness among groups such as women" (Staggenborg 1995: 341). In her book *Alternative and Activist New Media* (2011), Leah Lievrouw identified several characteristics that distinguish new social movements in the postmodern era from previous social movements of the industrial age such as the labour and the anti-war/peace movements: NSMs are seen to be of smaller scale, tackling a wide range of issues or focused on group identities,

often supporting cultural or symbolic (rather than for example economic) values and causes. NSMs are focused more on "the shared identities, professions, interests, values, and experiences of individual actors" (ibid. 47) who are mostly well-educated, articulated, creative knowledge workers, and their participants are primarily concerned with forming their own identities while avoiding the domination of formal institutions (ibid. 49). As a result, they "are more likely to identify with and organise around their youth, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, or professional background than with abstract categories like class", and NSMs are profoundly cultural rather than economic in nature, focusing instead on their symbolic capital (ibid. 50–51). Feminism – both as a movement and a plurality of feminist discourses in general – and contemporary feminist media in particular are profoundly cultural and represent these characteristics of new social movements.

In the first part of this article, we apply Lievrouw's genre framework for alternative, activist new media (2011) to the feminist media projects in Europe which we have identified in our empirical research. We present the scope (1.1) and the stance (1.2) of the feminist media projects as well as the action and agency of the feminist media producers (1.3). In the second part of the article we discuss how feminist media producers in Europe relate to and adopt feminist theories and activism and develop their own agenda and standpoints. Drawing upon theories on third wave feminism and our own empirical findings, we introduce three interrelated discourses: do-it-yourself feminism (2.1), intersectional perspectives on feminism (2.2) and pop feminism in the context of the German-speaking debate on new feminisms (2.3). In the conclusion we take up the central questions of this article and situate feminist media production within a larger social context.

Methodological approach

Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) served as the basis for the methodological approach for our study, as it allows for a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. In particular, the archival documentation of women-led and feminist media projects, a quantitative online survey of consumer habits and in-depth interviews with feminist media producers provided us with the empirical data to contextualise and analyse feminist alternative media production in Europe. In a first step, we conducted virtual ethnographic fieldwork (Hine 2000) to identify as many feminist media projects in Europe as possible, whereby the self-identification of the media producer as "feminist", their relation to the women's movement, feminist theory and (media) activism as well as the chosen media format (print and/or online) were essential selection criteria. In total, our sample includes 425 women-led and feminist media projects which are produced in grassroots and alternative on- and offline contexts in Europe, and which were analysed in reference to country, founding year, publish-

ers, publication language, frequency of publication, main content and use of social media. On the basis of this descriptive statistic of feminist media projects, we identified feminist media producers for in-depth interviews and selected case studies to explore the meaning, vulnerabilities and significance of feminist grassroots media products (step 2). We conducted 47 in-depth interviews with feminist media producers from 19 European countries as well as five in-depth case studies on *Plotki Femzine*, a post-Soviet Central and Eastern European feminist print and online zine project (Chidgey, Gunnarsson Payne and Zobl 2009), several German-speaking comic producers (Reitsamer and Zobl 2011), feminist zines (Chidgey 2009a; Zobl 2009, 2011a, 2011b), the feminist music network *Female Pressure* (Reitsamer 2012) and feminist blogs (Reitsamer and Zobl 2012). The in-depth interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted face-to-face in different European cities as well as online via Skype or email between 2009 and 2011. The interviewees, who included producers of weblogs, fanzines and other print media, were mainly white and middle class, and the majority studied at universities or already had a university degree. They were able to give detailed information on the access to alternative media production, their media projects and their feminist education.

In a third step, a quantitative online survey was conducted to explore the habits of feminist media consumers in Europe. In total 230 persons participated in this survey from January 2009 until April 2012. Additionally, all collected data was continuously documented on the digital archive *Grassroots Feminism: Transnational archives, resources and communities* (www.grassrootsfeminism.net), which was set up in December 2008. The website hosts three digital archives – "Grassroots Media in Europe", "Festivals: Ladyfest & Queer-Feminist" and "Zines" – and offers a chronological and geographical map of grassroots feminist media across Europe from the 1960s onwards, embracing digital and analogue media forms. By providing an interactive network portal and research platform for researchers, activists and media producers, this *Grassroots Feminism* Web 2.0 archive makes contemporary feminist, queer and antiracist cultural practices more accessible to researchers and the general public.

Image 1: A screenshot of Grassroots Feminism: Transnational archives, resources and communities

1 Scope and stance of feminist media projects

In *Alternative and Activist Media* (2011), Lievrouw describes the artistic and political practices of Dada and the Situationist International and other new social movements as central influences for today's alternative and activist uses in particular of new media. As such, activist art movements, new social movements and online activism, which emerged with the development of and access to the internet, are linked by three major themes: first, the scope or size of alternative and activist new media projects; second, the stance of movements and projects relative to the mainstream society and culture; and third, the nature of projects as action and activists as agents of social change (Lievrouw 2011: 59).[2] Lievrouw explores these three themes – scope, stance, and action and agency – as a "genre framework for alternative and activist new media." We have taken this distinction in scope, stance, and action and agency as a flexible toolbox and applied it to our empirical research. The analysis of the empirical data was oriented on the coding paradigm of Grounded Theory whereby Lievrouw's genre framework guided the identification of codes and concepts in the empirical material. In the following we will apply this framework to feminist media projects in Europe, beginning with their scope.

1.1 The scope of feminist media projects in Europe

According to Lievrouw's genre framework, scope includes two related features: the small-scale and the collaborative nature of alternative and activist new media projects. As "micro media" (Peretti 2001) or "tactical media" (Garcia and Lovink 1997), new media projects tend to be relatively small, low-cost projects with a do-it-yourself aesthetic as access to resources (e. g. in terms of funding and staff) is limited and a critical attitude towards dominant mass and consumer culture is taken. Moreover, compared to "mainstream" media, the outreach of alternative and activist media projects is relatively small, but as such they can provide their audience with a sense of familiarity and intimacy as they address their readers as insiders (Lievrouw 2011: 62). We have identified the following features to illustrate the small-scale nature of feminist media projects in Europe: media types, the number of media by European country, publisher, publishing frequency, and the use of language and social media platforms.

Media types: The 425 women-led and feminist grassroots media projects, which we have recorded in our survey, encompass 150 print media, including zines, magazines and journals, 140 blogs, 70 e-zines, 35 radio shows, five community TV shows, 17 archives, networks and databases, as well as eight artistic or visual interventions (posters, stickers, adbusting, subvertising). During the course of this survey, we found that some media projects distrib-

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2 For an application and analysis of Lievrouw's genre framework in relation to participatory feminist interventions into cultural production, see Zobl forthcoming.

ute their content through multiple different media channels, such as by operating a blog or an e-zine in addition to publishing a print zine or magazine. For example, the British feminist art journal *n.paradoxa* has been published as a print magazine since 1998; its website has since 2010 provided an online archive of previously published magazines and articles and an extensive bibliography on feminist art and feminist art theory. The Czech riot grrrl zine *Bloody Mary*, combining punk and riot grrrl feminism, was founded in 2000 by a collective, and in 2005 added a *Bloody Mary* blog. While each zine edition is dedicated to a specific theme, the collective blog is used for the announcement of feminist-queer events and the publication of feminist-queer news and articles about LGTBQ issues. The publishers of the Belgian blog *De Tweede Sekse* decided in 2010 to publish selected articles in a zine format with the aim of reaching a wider audience for their feminist-queer and anti-racist content. One of the editors explains the extension of the blog to a zine as follows: "We made the zine because we didn't want to limit ourselves just to people who have a broadband internet connection. A zine is easy to distribute and people can read it anywhere – on the train or at your home, even if you don't have internet."[3] Another example of the publication of content in both blog and zine formats is the Ukrainian anarcha-feminist *Svobodna* blog, edited since 2007 by a collective. In 2010 they published a zine on the issue of domination and violence in activism and the anarchist movement, and distributed it also as a download via their blog.

In addition to the use of varying media channels, we also observed changes of media format. In 2010 the Swiss magazine *l'émiliE* stopped publication as a print magazine and now appears as an e-zine, expanded to include a digital archive in which all the back issues since 1912 can be accessed. The Slovak print magazine *ASPEKT* (1993–2004) was discontinued in 2004 due to a reduction in funding; a smaller version of the magazine has been published on the internet since then.

Media by country: Of the total of 360 print media, blogs and e-zines, 56 are located in Germany and 51 in the UK, followed by 25 feminist media projects in Spain, 19 in Poland and 18 in Italy. In Austria, Belgium, France and Sweden we could identify 17 media projects per country. The reasons for the varying geographic distribution of feminist media projects in Europe were not investigated more specifically; in the interviews, however, the media producers point out that the relative lack of feminist media in their country is based on the country's size, the political orientation of the government, the state funding situation for feminist (media) projects and the influence of feminist theory and activism on a younger generation of women. (Table 1)

Publishing frequency: Of the total of 150 print media, 39 were issued quarterly, 33 semi-annually and 34 were published at irregular intervals; in addition, 17 print media were published yearly, 12 published three issues per

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3 All quotations in this article (unless otherwise indicated) stem from face-to-face or online interviews with feminist media producers conducted throughout our research. All quotations from other sources are marked as such. Quotes in the original German language of the interviews and other sources have been translated by the authors.

Table 1: Media by country

Country	Print	Blogs	E-Zines	Total
Germany	21	25	10	56
UK	16	30	5	51
Spain	8	10	7	25
Poland	6	5	8	19
Italy	3	11	4	18
Austria	11	2	4	17
Belgium	11	6	–	17
France	7	9	1	17
Sweden	10	4	3	17
Switzerland	8	1	3	12
Croatia	3	1	5	9
Russia	3	4	2	9
Czech Republic	5	1	2	8
Netherlands	4	2	2	8
Slovenia	2	5	1	8
Portugal	3	3	1	7
Romania	3	4	–	7
Denmark	2	2	2	6
Hungary	1	4	1	6
Ireland	3	2	1	6
Serbia	4	1	1	6
Ukraine	2	3	1	6
Norway	3	1	1	5
Finland	4	–	–	4
Belarus	–	1	1	2
Bulgaria	2	–	–	2
Georgia	–	1	1	2
Macedonia	1	1	–	2
Slovakia	1	–	1	2
Turkey	–	–	2	2
Albania	1	–	–	1
Estonia	1	–	–	1
Greece	1	–	–	1
Iceland	–	1	–	1
	150	140	70	360

year, eight were monthly and seven bimonthly. Sixteen print media were founded before the year 1980, 20 between 1980 and 1989, 47 in the 1990s, and from 2000 to 2010, an average of six new print media were founded per year. In 2006 a high point was reached with 13 start-ups. Unlike print media, which have longer lead times for their publications, the publishers of blogs and e-zines are frequently able to make new content available to their readers. 44 blogs and 27 e-zines provide new content daily, 28 blogs and 12 e-zines offer weekly updates, and 21 blogs and seven e-zines update their content monthly. The first e-zine recorded in our survey was founded in 1995; the first blog was launched in 2001. 32 of the 70 e-zines were founded between 2006 and 2009, with a peak in 2006 with 11 new e-zines; 2008 was a high point in the creation of blogs with 33.

Language: The vast majority of the content of a total of 360 print media, blogs and e-zines is published in the native language of the editors; 30 media products are offered in two languages, whereby the second language is usually English. The collective that publishes the Romanian zine *Love Kills (Dragostia Ucide)*, for example, publishes both a Romanian and an English edition. While the Romanian zine edition is dedicated to local events and gives insight into international anarchist texts, the aim of the English zine edition, partially with other content, is to raise money for the activities of the collective. Other examples of a multilingual orientation are the Spanish technology blog *Dones i noves* (since 2006), with content in Spanish, English and Catalan; the Belgian *Scumgrrrls* magazine (since 2002), with content in English, French and Dutch; and the Georgian e-zine *CaucAsia* (2005–2009), which has published its issues in Russian, Georgian and English (becoming a Russian-speaking blog in 2009, however). A few media projects make use of four or even more languages to disseminate their content, such as *Trikster – Nordic Queer Journal* (Denmark, since 2008), with content in English and three other Nordic languages (Swedish, Norwegian and Danish), or *Migrazine* (Austria, since 2006), with content in a variety of languages, such as German, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. In their use of various languages they aim to transcend language barriers by addressing readers with differing language skills and knowledge as well as an international community.

Table 2: Language

Language	Print	Blogs	E-Zines	Total
Monolingual	131	125	57	313
Bilingual	9	12	9	30
Trilingual	6	2	1	9
Multilingual (≥ 4)	4	1	3	8
	150	140	70	360

Use of social media platforms: Contrary to our assumption that feminist media producers would use social media platforms to a large extent, only 110 producers of online and print media used one or more social media platforms

to a great extent. In other words, two-thirds of feminist media projects went without the use of social media platforms. The most frequently used social media platform is Facebook, followed by Twitter and MySpace, and feminist online media (blogs and e-zines) use these services more frequently than feminist print media.

Table 3: Social Media

Social Media*	Print**	Blogs**	E-Zines**	Total**
no social media	121	82	47	250
social media	29	58	23	110
Facebook	21	37	19	77
Twitter	9	27	9	45
MySpace	10	6	7	23
flickr	0	12	3	15
YouTube	2	7	4	13

* multiple matches possible
** Print: n = 150; Blogs: n = 140; E-Zines: n = 70; Total: n = 360

The range of feminist media projects in relation to media type, publishing frequency, the use of social media platforms and publication language illustrate to the heterogeneity of small-scale, low-cost "micro-media."

The second aspect of scope that Lievrouw identifies for alternative and activist new media is their specific form of organization. The majority of these projects are not produced individually but in collaboration. They are the product of cooperation by individuals and groups and as such they are group efforts. This "new collectivism" (Lievrouw 2011: 62) is based on community building, interactivity and participation in the design of the media as well as the organization of the working and operation processes, and is associated with postmodern artistic practices and activism. The "new collectivism" of feminist media producers becomes clear when we researched the publishers of the media in the sense that they are mostly collaboratively produced.

Publisher: The majority of feminist media is published by independent collectives and groups (129), followed by independent women's organizations and NGOs (102), individuals (74), independent editors in the academic context (37) and small independent, self-founded corporate-structured publishers and editors as part of larger corporate publishers (13); in addition, five feminist media projects are published by public institutions, labour unions and political parties. While print media (53) and e-zines (30) are edited mainly by NGOs or independent women's organizations, blogs are overwhelmingly produced by groups (61) and by individuals (56) rather than by NGOs or women's organizations (19).

The collaborative, shared and volunteer efforts of feminist media producers are illustrated by the co-editor of the queer print magazine *Hugs and Kisses. Tender All Your Gender*, which has been published in German twice a year since 2007:

> *Hugs and Kisses* has many supporters. There are people for the distribution; we have several proofreaders and graphic designers. That's a good thing, as not everyone can allow themselves at any time to be part of a non-profit project, even if they want to. We have a webmaster who only attends to the homepage.

The co-editor of *Hugs and Kisses* points to the decisive group effort of feminist media projects as well as to the constraints these projects face due to access to resources in terms of time, funding and staff.

Another example for a collaborative effort is *Plotki Femzine*, a post-Soviet Central and Eastern European (CEE) feminist print and online zine project that is part of a larger youth generated media project called "Plotki". *Plotki Femzine* was launched by a group of young women as a response to what they saw as increasing hierarchical and patriarchal attitudes within the network. Through collaborative acts of discussion, experimental art, auto-biographical essays, and critical fiction, the *Plotki Femzine* project brings together women living and working in CEE countries to create an emerging, collaborative space for feminist discussions and an articulation of feminist identities and connections (for a further discussion of *Plotki Femzine* see Chidgey, Gunnarsson Payne and Zobl 2009).

The scope of the feminist media projects, as well as their small-scale and collaborative nature, says little about their relationship to the "mainstream" media and hegemonic culture, however. In what follows, therefore, the stance of feminist media projects is described in more detail, as well as what they share with alternative and activist new media projects, namely their heterotopic nature, their subcultural quality and their use of irony and humour (Lievrouw 2011).

1.2 The stance of feminist media projects in Europe

Feminist media producers describe their projects often as countersites to "mainstream" media because they offer a space where people can experiment with ideas, express themselves and describe their experiences. The Belgian editor of such zines as *Flapper Gathering* and *(Different Worlds) Same Heartbeats* and organizer of *The Feminist Poster Project* articulates such an approach: "Zines can function as a participatory alternative medium to give alternative views on the society that can't be found in the mainstream media."

In this respect feminist media projects reflect what Lievrouw identifies as characteristics in relation to the stance of alternative and activist new media projects. Firstly, these projects are heterotopic because they "act as 'other spaces' or 'countersites' for expression, affiliation, and creativity apart from the dominant culture" (Lievrouw 2011: 63). We see this heterotopic stance especially in feminist zines which often function as a heterogeneous, "culturally productive, politicized counterpublic space" (Nguyen 2000) for feminist networking and reflection by a younger generation of women in different parts of the world (Zobl 2010). Zine makers discuss topics – often taboo issues – that are left out, marginalized or underrepre-

sented in dominant media, culture and politics, such as abuse, incest and complex interactions of sexism, homophobia, transphobia and racism. In addressing and critically discussing such issues, they not only point to the challenges and conflicts of their societies but they also bring "new, alternative, 'other' values and practices for the rest of society" (Lievrouw 2011: 64) to the table.

Second, the heterotopic nature of feminist media projects is associated with their "subcultural quality" (Lievrouw 2001: 65), which is rooted in shared insider knowledge and a "hyper self-reflexivity about the nature of pop culture" (Collins 1995: 2; quoted in Lievrouw 2011: 66). Accordingly, feminist media producers require a certain access to and knowledge of (sub) cultural codes, language and symbols. The co-editor of *Hugs and Kisses* emphasizes the strong connections to queer-feminist scenes and their shared "subcultural capital" (Thornton 1995):

> *Hugs and Kisses* shows the plurality of the queer movement by reporting about this movement. That's the reason why the contacts to subcultural initiatives and organisations that follow a political claim are very important. We know many of these organisations and we try to extend our networks further.

Similarly, the Love Kills Collective from Romania, which publishes the *Love Kills* zine and translates anarchist literature into Romanian, notes:

> Since four years we are also organizing an anarcha-feminist festival in Romania with international participation. The aim [. . .] is to establish and strengthen the bounds and links between activists involved and interested in anarcha-feminism and to develop a network. [. . .] But we know that our work is visible mostly in our own small scene and not on a large social scale. But as we are aiming towards anarchism, and as we see anarchism as an ongoing emerging occurrence, we strongly believe that even the slightest effort has its own meaningful importance and contribution.

The collective is aware of the specific local embeddedness of their activities in the feminist-queer scenes in Romania, but they assume that their work feeds into broader translocal cultures of social change.

Zine makers like the Love Kills Collective often speak about the advantages of networking with alternative media producers and media activists who share the same or similar (sub)cultural, social and political interests. A common feature of the analysed media projects is that they refer to networking discourses through which the affiliation of feminist groups and positions as well as collectivity is established. Networking occurs on a local, transnational and virtual level. In fact, this aspect of networking across national borders using the internet proves to be a major difference compared to the more restricted (in terms of geography, time, etc.) communication exchanges that took place during the era of second wave feminism. Networking among contemporary feminist media occurs over a wide range: from linking to other media projects (where further interactions between media producers do not occur) through editorial references to other feminist media projects with similar orientations in content and perspectives (with cluster-building in regards to content), to a pooling of online and

offline activities of feminist media projects which often share the same spoken language (with cluster-building in regards to geography).

Zines, for example, circulate within a transnational peer-to-peer network that can be characterised as a system of online and offline exchange, dissemination and distribution outside of the mainstream (Zobl 2009). This network includes not only print and e-zines but also mail-order catalogues, so-called distros, online resources, mailing lists, message boards as well as zine meetings and conferences, exhibitions, workshops, libraries and archives. In this decentralized network, zine producers not only trade their zines via the mail – and virtually via email and social networking sites – but sooner or later they frequently become acquainted personally through zine picnics, festivals or workshops. Many of the zine editors we interviewed stress that they got to know similar-thinking people in other countries via the internet and got to know new and different perspectives by exchanging zines with them. Embedded in local and transnational contexts, zines can function as "a kind of backbone to subcultural feminist activism, allowing zine makers to link personal experiences to larger political activist work" (Schilt and Zobl 2008: 187).

However, the often subcultural quality of feminist media projects also has its drawbacks and has been criticized by media producers for its structural and individual mechanisms of exclusion. Misster Raju Rage (formerly known as Misster Scratch), producer of the English-speaking zine *Masculine Femininities* (UK), points to the underrepresentation of people of colour and of certain topics as well as to the limitations of access and demographics:

> I enjoy the variety and creativity of what there is out there but [. . .] I would like to see more people of colour, more about issues of race and sexuality, more about gender and surviving violence and things that don't get discussed much in our communities or from certain perspectives. The limiting thing about zines is getting access to them. Often they are distributed at events that are mainly white and middle class dominated, in specific scenes, which is problematic.

As such, by employing certain cultural codes, symbols, language, style and aesthetics, an orientation and associated affiliation toward a specific – subcultural – community occurs that involves overwhelmingly a white, middle-class and well-educated demographic. Whilst constant failure is inscribed in processes of media production and in building networks and coalitions, the distribution of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) is essential. Feminist media producers such as Misster Raju Rage point to the fact that these challenges need to be further negotiated and interrogated within feminist media networks and subcultural scenes.

The third characteristic Lievrouw (2011: 66) describes in relation to the stance of alternative and activist new media projects is the use of irony and humour. In feminist media projects, especially zines, humour and irony manifests itself in cut-and-paste collages to subvert and deconstruct the hegemonic representations of femininity as beautiful, successful and young and to challenge the commodification and sexualisation of women's bodies

as a dominant advertising and marketing strategy. Janice Radway (2002) describes such playful experimentations with subject positions as "narrative gleaning" and "insubordinate creativity" in the lives and cultural practices of girls and young women. Producing zines and using the format of a collage, Radway argues, becomes a means for young women to express intertextuality and multiplicity as well as their resistance to dominant modes of femininity.

The collectively produced zine *Riot Grrrl London*, for example, overwrites in a black-and-white collage an image of a face of a young, beautiful woman – as often used in advertising – with a cut-and-paste typeface declaring "boring meaningless crap", and juxtaposes it below in small letters with the question: "How many skinny airbrushed models can you stand?"

Image 2: Collage in the Riot Grrrl London zine (issue 3, 2003)
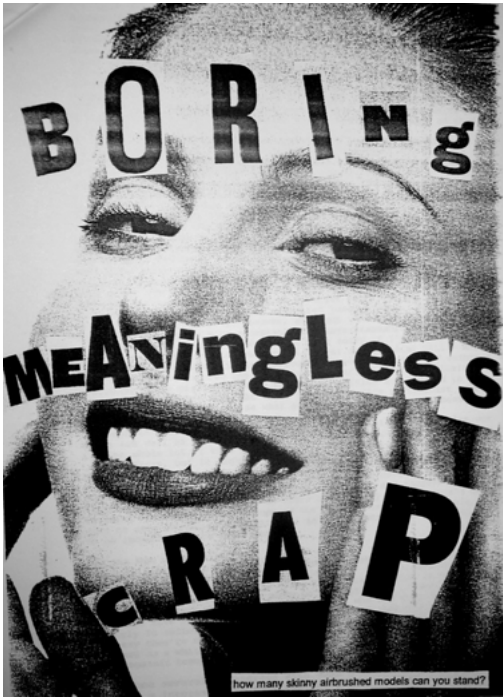
The culture jamming actions by street artist Princess Hijab (Paris) are a further example of the appropriation of advertising images to create new meanings in unexpected ways.[4]

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4 For a discussion of the culture jamming activities of Princess Hijab, see the article by Jenny Gunnarsson Payne in this volume.

1.3 Action and agency of feminist media projects

The third theme of Lievrouw's genre framework connecting activist art movements, new social movements and online activism is action and agency – "that is, the extent to which projects are conceived and executed as *action*, by participants who see themselves and their projects as *agents* of social change" (Lievrouw 2011: 68). Activist art, social movement theory, and alternative/activist new media projects are characterized by being interventionist – as their creators aim to interrupt or alter existing conditions, often by direct action – and by being perishable – that is short-lived, nomadic, ephemeral, temporary, with rapid response (ibid. 60, 68–69). In our study, the interventionist and perishable features of action and agency are clearly exemplified by media producers who situate themselves in a do-it-yourself context of queer-feminist scenes. In the following we will describe the social practices of the two German comic producers The Artist of *Trouble X Comics*[5] and Ka Schmitz to give a more precise picture of their self-organized participation in the media landscape and their activist and interventionist practices (for a detailed discussion see Reitsamer and Zobl 2011).

The Artist of *Trouble X Comics* and Ka Schmitz consider their drawings as an activist practice, intended to break heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality in their interplay with other categories of social differentiation, and situate their comics generally outside the mainstream in a queer-feminist do-it-yourself culture. The two illustrators use varying publishing formats (such as comics, zines, blogs, games) and distribution channels and address heterogeneous topics. With their critique of social power relations, they share the interventionist aim of breaking open and changing hierarchical gender relations. The distribution of their comics takes place primarily through decentralized networks of queer-feminist scenes such as alternative bookstores, Ladyfest music and art festivals, exhibitions, workshops, online distros, mailing lists or message boards. Within the "network turn" in New Social Movement theory, such a dissemination of information and the building of temporary communities has been termed "networked activism" (Atkinson 2010: 10). Ka Schmitz and The Artist of *Trouble X Comics* are part of this "networked activism" and they contribute to "new social movement networks" (Atkinson 2010: 10) by circulating their comics at copy/print cost or completely free. Access to the comics is ensured primarily by the internet, where they can be found on blogs, MySpace, Flickr and Facebook and can be downloaded. As a result, Ka Schmitz and The Artist of *Trouble X Comics* describe the free distribution of their comics as "a kind of queer action" which aims at minimizing social inequalities. Consequently, they attempt to break through the boundaries between consumers and producers by actively involving comic readers, supporting individual initiatives with "how-to" instructions and passing along knowledge away from traditional educational institutions

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5 At her/his express wish, The Artist of *Trouble X Comics* will not be mentioned by name, but will be represented in the text anonymously and ambiguously.

in self-organized workshops. In the "how to DIY a comic" zine,[6] The Artist of *Trouble X Comics* describes her/his approach to drawing, which she/he does not wish to have understood as formal guidance, but rather as an encouragement to begin on one's own through this "DIY practice". In the context of DIY culture, drawing queer-feminist comics becomes, through the interconnection of feminist self-empowerment strategies with a leftist critique of capitalism, an interventionist practice in social power relations. The focus is on emancipatory bottom-up processes through "learning by doing" and "skill-sharing"; the established standards and guidelines for "perfect" drawings are nullified, deconstructed and ignored. For example, Ka Schmitz holds comics workshops for girls, women and trans youth. In these workshops, a low-threshold opportunity to enter into comic drawing and a platform for informal learning is accelerated by Ka Schmitz into a collective self-empowerment process. The execution of instructions by the workshop participants and an orientation to results takes back seat. An artistic practice is mediated that rejects individual authorship and the established topos of the "artistic genius" through collective ways of working. Drawing comics is, in the workshops, dialogically and collectively conceived; it serves a tool for individual and collective agency and action. Therefore, comics, comic zines and comic workshops can be understood as an interventionist – though short-lived and ephemeral – medium for local and translocal dialogue, community and network building, and exchange of experience and knowledge. In the context of the riot grrrl movement, which emerged in the 1990s out of the post-punk music scene in the United States, zinester Mimi Nguyen (2000) speaks of an informal educational project as a "punk rock teaching machine", whose basic principle is that every reader is potentially a producer who can play all positions from the production to the distribution of her/his cultural artefacts. The focus of the social practices of the DIY culture is not on success in terms of the number of zine readers. The heterogeneity of voices, which is expressed in a variety of media, is crucial, as well as becoming an agent of social change by engaging in and producing media that is interventionist.

2   Negotiating feminism as a discursive space

> "Feminist identities are usually achieved, not given.
> [. . .] Feminist identities are created and reinforced when feminists get together, act together, and read what other feminists have written" (Mansbridge 1995: 29).

How do feminist media producers in Europe relate to feminist theories and activism? And which feminist discourses, standpoints and identities do they develop with their interventionist and activist practices? Drawing upon theoretical concepts of third wave feminism and our empirical findings, we will introduce in this section three interrelated discourses arti-

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6 See the visual contribution by Elke Zobl in this volume.

culated by feminist media producers in Europe: do-it-yourself feminism, intersectional perspectives of feminism, and pop feminism in the context of the German-speaking "new feminisms" debate.

Third wave feminism is a neologism coined in 1992 by Rebecca Walker, the daughter of literary feminist Alice Walker, in an article published in the US *Ms. magazine* heralding a new generation of feminist activists who are not "postfeminist feminists" (Heywood 2006; for a discussion on postfeminism, see Genz and Brabon 2009). However, there is no easy agreement that a third wave feminism actually exists, not least because activists and scholars have been divided about the usefulness of heralding a new wave. While some see "third wave" as a useful label for a new generation's feminism (Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Dicker and Piepmeier 2003; Heywood 2006), others consider it as a false distinction further promoting division between different generations and subsuming differences/nuances under epochal monoliths (Berger 2006). Agnieszka Graff (2007) argues that in the national, geo-political and historical context of Poland feminism resists the Anglo-American wave chronology but is also in part conditioned by Western and third wave feminism's influences (such as its preoccupation with pop culture). According to Genz and Brabon (2009) third wave feminism situates itself in the field of popular culture and continues to understand a critical engagement with pop culture as a component of political struggle. Feminist youth (sub)cultures and networks, such as riot grrrl, began using the internet for networking, organising local music events and producing websites, e-zines and blogs; such networks are generally considered an expression of third wave feminism (Reitsamer 2012). In the course of her investigation of riot grrrl in the United States, Garrison (2000) argues that the use of new media technologies for communication, cultural production and political activism, as well networking between women of different age cohorts are defining features of third wave feminism.

Whilst links can be made to the consciousness-raising strategies of the previous feminist generations, the rhetorical style of self-disclosure and personal politics has led many critics to label contemporary feminists as a "weakened form of feminism", too individualistic and lacking systemic critiques: "There are hints of good old second wave collective activity in the websites, the zines and the concerts such as Ladyfest . . . but [third-wave feminism] has a more individualist edge, reflecting among other things a radical suspicion of the politics of identity, and a marked shift to 'lifestyle politics'" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 171). Tracking the path of the "personal is political" brand of feminist politics in North American, Deborah Siegel positions the latest "wave" of confessional testimony-based feminist publishing – found in zines, magazines, books, and online – as "light on the details for a program for external change" (Siegel 2007: 150–151).

The overwhelming majority of the media producers interviewed in the course of this study position themselves and their media projects in relation to second wave feminism. The publisher of the *AMIW – All My Independent Women* blog (since 2005), talks about her encounter with and (re)appropriation of the book *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* ("New Portuguese

Letters") by Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Velho da Costa (the "Three Marias"), which is considered to be a landmark text of 1970s Portuguese feminism.

> I knew about the importance of this book, that it was very radical, very sexual, but I had no idea about the content. This is pretty much what every Portuguese knows about the book but they have never read it. Finally I read the book and it was an absolute wonder. I've never imagined that it is really a piece of literature which manages to cross times. It is not so much rooted in the 70s, but it talks a lot of Portugal in the 21ˢᵗ century. How women still construct their identity and their sexuality, their relationship to their family, their friends and to political institutions. It had such an impact on me. I emailed everyone in the *AMIW* network and said: Guys, Girls, let's read this book collectively, let's talk about it, let's produce work that relates to it.

The *AMIW* editor further explains how tiring it sometimes is to convince people that feminism is not an outdated and anachronistic ideology. Feminists today, she argues, deal with different issues; they have a different agenda and use different strategies than did the feminists of the 1970s.

Several feminist media producers develop strategies to relate their media projects to second wave feminism such as the reference to key thinkers of the women's movements. The Belgian blog *De Tweede Sekse* named their publication after Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking book "The Second Sex" (*Le Deuxième Sexe*, 1949); the Belgian magazine *Scumgrrrls* refers to Valerie Solana's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967–68); and the Swiss magazine *l'émiliE* is named after the suffragette Emilie Gourd who founded the magazine in 1912.

A further strategy for media producers to underline the necessity of feminist politics and to express one's own standpoint is the publication of manifestos and manifesto-like declarations. The French activist group La Barbe note in *Le Manifeste de la Barbe* that "it's time to revive feminism and to set out to conquer all fields of power, in all its different forms" (2008, authors' translation)[7]. Similarly, the French activist network *Osez le féminisme* (2009) speak about the aims achieved by the women's movements and argue for the need of feminist activism, especially in time of economic crisis and instability. In the declaration "Why Pro Feminism" (Za Feminizm n. d.) the Russian activist group *ЗА ФЕМИНИЗМ – Za Feminizm (Pro Feminism)* situate themselves in the tradition of feminist struggles for equal rights and the advancement of women's living conditions worldwide. The author of the Russian blog *Feminisn'ts* takes up the common phrase "I'm not a feminist, but . . ." to reflect upon feminist writing, including a variety of texts dealing with feminist history and theories in Russia (Feminisn'ts n. d.).

However, the media producers interviewed also explain that second wave feminism should be "updated" due to neoliberal changes in society. While in North American the term "third wave feminism" is frequently discussed in feminist media, the feminist media producers in our study

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7 In the french original: "Il est temps de remettre le féminisme en selle, et de partir à la conquête des territoires de pouvoir, sous toutes ses formes."

(with a focus on Europe) hardly mentioned this expression. As a result, they frequently use the adjectives "new", "queer", "postcolonial", "pop" or "do-it-yourself" to specify their feminist self-understanding.

2.1 Do-It-Yourself Feminism

The beginnings of do-it-yourself culture are rooted in the avant-garde art movements of the 1950s and the emerging new social movements of the 1960s. In the late 1970s, punk rock, media and style revolved around the DIY ethos with self-produced fanzines, independent record labels and alternative distribution networks, with the result that DIY as an organizing principle gained a greater currency in alternative cultures. George McKay defines the 1990s DIY culture as a "youth-centred and -directed cluster of interests and practices around green radicalism, direct action politics, new musical sounds and experiences" (McKay 1998: 2). Marc Calmbach sees DIY culture as characterized by "self-empowerment, self-organization, improvisation and initiative" (Calmbach 2007: 17). DIY culture participants evidence a dedicated interest in the use of new technologies (computers, video, the internet, etc.); they position themselves against hegemonic ideologies through, among other things, art and music production; and they try to produce and market their cultural productions as independent from commercial structures as possible (Kearney 1998; McKay 1998 and 2010; Spencer 2005). DIY culture and its networks place value on varied, processual social relations and communication processes with respect to established standards of professionalization, the acquisition of expertise and intellectual property (anti-copyright) (Atton 2002: 27). In the context of feminism, the 1990s riot grrrl scenes and the subsequent feminist-queer Ladyfest music and arts festivals developed a cultural activism based on doing-it-yourself, whereby music and skill-sharing is fused with political resistance and celebration, and the boundaries between organizer, participant and audience are blurred (Chidgey 2009b; Kearney 1998; Reitsamer 2008; Schilt and Zobl 2008; Zobl 2011c). Doreen Piano (2002) notes that women as cultural producers often act within a community that functions as a learning environment for teaching DIY practices, as trading of information has always been a part of (sub)cultural production. In the UK, in activist contexts and among feminist zine producers we have noted an increase in the use of the term "DIY feminism". Red Chidgey has stated that DIY feminism is used as "an umbrella term fusing together different types of feminism" which draws "on genealogies of punk cultures, grassroots movements, and the technologies of late capitalism" (Chidgey 2009b). The Belgian maker of the *Flapper Gathering* (among many others) zine describes DIY feminism as follows:

> DIY feminism is about everyone doing feminism ourselves and making changes, however small they may seem at first sight. It means not waiting for others, for "professionals" or politicians, to make the world more women-friendly and to solve problems related to sexism.

Most often, DIY feminist actions in their many forms take an anti-capitalist stance: "self/collective produced culture, politics, entertainment, and work are held as ideals, and not-for-profit voluntary/activist labour is the movement's lifeblood" (Chidgey 2009b: n. p.). This is illustrated by the Berlin-based *Make Out Magazine* (MOM), which acknowledges in its first issue (November 2011) their contextualisation in anti-capitalist DIY culture and feminism:

> We don't exactly identify as capitalists. That's why you might notice our publication isn't polluted with ads. D.I.Y. zine culture was an integral part of queer politics and third-wave feminism in the 90s, but now that blogs have become the weapon of choice for spreading propaganda, we wanted to revisit this tactical, timeless format with international relevance a bit of grown-up sheen. Not too polished, though – we like it rough! (Sona, Krusche, Spilker and Hansom 2011: n. p.)

Similarly, *Emancypunx* – an anarchist feminist group running a record label, festival organizer, tour manager and host of a zine library – was founded in the mid 1990s in Warsaw to promote feminism and women's issues within an underground DIY distribution network. They also point to their strong anti-corporate and alternative DIY stance:

> One of the main goals is to foster the diy hc punk network and to keep our creativity, spaces, creative products far from corporate business. [. . .] Emancypunx is and always was a non-profit, non-commercial initiative run on voluntary and D.I.Y. basis. (Emancypunx n. d.)

Media producers who sympathize with a DIY ethos and understand their media projects as "independent" and "autonomous" often revert to discourses that are critical of society and its established and continuously reinforced gender relations. They build "alternative economies" (Atton 2002; Chidgey 2009b) or a "DIY industry" (Peterson and Bennett 2004: 5) which are based on small collectives, fans-turned-entrepreneurs and volunteer labour for the non-commercial exchange of their media and as alternatives to commercial media corporations. Feminist media is circulated in the "DIY industry" in the context of a feminist and anti-commercial agency as well as in the wider alternative (sub)cultural feminist scenes and networks. This process of media production (and networking) aims to establish horizontal, non-hierarchical structures. As a result, for the overwhelming majority of feminist media producers who describe themselves as "DIY feminists", social change can only take place through a radical critique of a neoliberal system and through alternative economies outside of neoliberal exploitation logic.

2.2 Intersectional perspectives of feminism

The development of intersectional feminist discourses is directly related to the debates about the difference between women since the 1980s, which were initiated by lesbian women, "women of colour" and postcolonial

feminists. They question the category of "woman" as the universal guiding category for the creation of feminist theory and call attention to the interconnections of the various axes of difference that inequalities can construct. An initial critique of the patriarchal concept of white middle class feminists and the idea of "global sisterhood" was formulated by the Combahee River Collective (1982), a coalition of black lesbian women. The collective drew attention to their life realities, including how they had faced discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender and sexuality, and carved out alliances between women on the basis of their different social positions. Patricia Hill Collins explores the discrimination of women of colour; she draws on the concept of intersectionality and proposes understanding race, class and gender as "interlocking systems of oppression" (Hill Collins 1990: 221) and analysing the resulting social inequalities as part of an overall "matrix of domination" (ibid.) in order to avoid an additive analysis for the explanation of complex forms of oppression. Additive models of inequality research focus on gender category and add additional categories such as age, sexuality, race, class and religion; moreover, the dichotomy of being black or white, male or female, etc., in these models have their basis in Western thought. Following the critique by black women, postcolonial feminists also began to question the feminist theory project on the basis of its "Euro-centric universalism" (Mohanty 1988). They held that white Western feminists, without any regard for the particularities of race, class and the geopolitical situatedness of women, construct representations of the "Third World woman" as a victim (Trinh 1989; Mohanty 1988) while the experiences, struggles and theories of women from the global South and minority women in Western societies are suppressed (Gümen 1998). Only through these discourses and negations could the white Western woman be constructed as a modern emancipated subject.

Several of the media producers interviewed embrace the critique raised by women of colour of the homogenisation of the category "woman" by white feminists of the second wave and acknowledge the anti-essentialism and multiculturalism associated with postmodernism.

The British zine *Race Revolt*, for example, describes itself as "an intervention into the silences around race in the queer, feminist and activist communities" (Saeed n. d.) and as a result, it focuses on issues of racism, ethnicity and identity. In the introduction of the first issue, *Race Revolt's* editor notes: "This is a beginning. A beginning of a much needed conversation that considers and addresses race within feminist, queer and diy communities and beyond. That considers the whiteness of these communities, that finds ways for us to move forward" (Saeed 2007: n. p.). The editor points to the fact that in feminist media projects, whiteness often appears to be unmarked, invisible and a dominant construction of identity (for critical whiteness studies, see e. g. Frankenberg 1993).

One blog in particular pursues a broader focus in its themes and content. The Italian activist collective Fikasicula, which runs the blog *Femminismo a Sud*, aims to create a virtual space to share experiences and opinions and to write openly about the Italian conservative government. After the

blog was set up, one of their very first steps was to provide a so-called "ABC of technological feminism" (Fikasicula 2008), which is a manual on how to use the internet in general and weblogs in particular for feminist, anti-racist and anti-fascist action. In their self-description, Femminismo a Sud espouses a postcolonial and an intersectional perspective towards society, culture and politics in order to understand how sexism, racism and fascism are related to one another:

> Our blog is called *Femminismo a Sud* because the whole blog has a postcolonial view on reality. We locate ourselves at the South of the hegemonic bio-territoriality. We think that in our society, particularly in Italy, there is a use of power which controls women, immigrants and all persons who don't want this type of system and its use of power. We think that sexism, racism and fascism are different aspects of the same hegemonic situation. And therefore we can't fight against sexism if we don't understand how sexism is interwoven with racism and fascism.

Although the term intersectionality is not mentioned in the quote, the collective sees a necessity in engaging with the many different forms of oppression that people experience in their daily lives, including violence against women and children. Therefore, their blog offers many personal stories about experienced violence, complemented by a variety of advice and strategies for self-empowerment.

A much nuanced standpoint is articulated by the editors of the multilingual Austrian e-zine *Migrazine. Online Magazine by Female Migrants for All* (German: *Migrazine. Online Magazin von Migrantinnen für alle*), which has been published by MAIZ, an autonomous migrant organisation in Linz, since 2006. The initial idea of *Migrazine* is to produce a feminist alternative online media in which women with migrant backgrounds are responsible for the whole process of production. According to their website, *Migrazine* is "self-organised participation in the media landscape, intrusion into the dominant discourse, democratisation of information" (n. d.). In the centre of their feminist and anti-racist self-conception stands the category "female migrant", which is understood as a political identity taking an oppositional position in society and pointing to feminist and anti-racist partiality. This self-conception, however, does not necessarily mean that all articles published on the website discuss migrant-specific issues; nor does it suggest that *Migrazine* aims to speak for women with migrant backgrounds. Rather the editors of *Migrazine* position the experiences and knowledge production of women with migrant backgrounds at the centre of their alternative online media. In the February 2011 issue, the term "Second Generation" ("Secondo"/"Seconda") is taken up to refer to the life realities of people "who are not migrants, but are constructed as 'the Other' by members of majority societies" (Migrazine 2011). Several writers address the self-understanding of a "post-migrant" generation which calls traditional identity conceptions into question and introduces a new vocabulary of belonging. Hence, *Migrazine* can be understood as an elaborated response to the hegemonic discourses on the "First" and "Second Generation" of migrants in

Western societies by demanding political rights for migrants, such as the right to vote, and by intervening in the violent stereotypical representations through which people with migrant backgrounds are construed as "the Other". *Femminismo a Sud* and *Migrazine* question traditional identity constructions and national identity, especially with regard to the strict European immigration laws, and propose how one's individual identity exists at the intersection of multiple identity categories.

In addition to these intersectional feminist discourses of media producers, which have set their focus on racism and "whiteness" in feminist-queer communities *(Race Revolt)*, the conservative policies of their country *(Femminismo a Sud)* or European migration policy *(Migrazine)*, some media producers also make use of the term queer and queer theory in the context of intersectionality. Queer theory postulates that gender and sexuality should be understood as social and cultural constructions, without biological determinism. Hence, "queer" should not be conceptualized as an identity, but instead as a critique of identity and an "identity under construction, a site of constant becoming" (Jagose 1996: 165). As a critique of identity, queer theory does not relate representations and social practices of gender and sexuality to the hierarchical gender differences and heteronormativity, nor does it seek the dissolution or the duplication of the sexes (Engel 2002).

A queer-feminist intersectional standpoint is represented, for example, by the editor of the webmagazine *Trikster – Nordic Queer Journal*:

> Definitely we try to promote an intersectional perspective of queer feminism. I think some of the most important thinkers working in feminist and queer and critical race studies today are those who are able to see the ways in which gender, sexuality and race are folded into each other in different ways. Especially in our current political situation, I think the ability to work intersectionally with these different terms is so crucial if we are to formulate a kind of coalition politics that could really, really work. We are talking about intersectionality and the need of to continue to develop queer and feminist and anti-racist politics that looks sideways and not only towards one vector of suppression.

The editor of *Trikster* opposes a reception of queer theory, gender and sexuality that sees itself as the central axis of difference, and thus loses sight of other categories of social stratification. For an intersectional perspective of queer feminism, the impetus of the critique of racism by women and queers of colour is important, because these critiques point to the entanglement of sexuality with other categories such as gender, race, class and age.

2.3 Pop Feminism in the context of the German-speaking new feminisms debate

While in the US, the term third wave feminism dominates the discussion about a new generation of feminist actors, the term "new feminism" sparked similar debates about the feminist self-understanding of a younger generation of women in German-speaking countries. The starting point for this "new" discussion of feminism was the "demography debate" (Klaus

2008), as well as the moment when the debate that arose when the "third" wave of feminism swept over (however with much less public reception) from the US to Germany. This was followed by the publication of numerous popular books under the buzzword "New Feminism", such as *Die neue F-Klasse* ("The New F Class", 2006) by the novelist Thea Dorn; *Wir Alphamädchen* ("We Alpha Girls", 2008) by the journalists Meredith Haaf, Susanne Klingner, and Barbara Streidl; *Neue Deutsche Mädchen* ("New German Girls", 2008) by novelist Jana Hensel and journalist Elisabeth Raether; the edited collection *Das F-Wort* ("The F-Word", 2007) by Mirja Stöcker; as well as the novel *Feuchtgebiete* ("Wetlands", 2008) by Charlotte Roche. Among them were several publications that explicitly speak of a "Popfeminismus" ("pop feminism") or were connected with it in some way, like *Hot Topic. Popfeminismus heute* ("Pop Feminism Today", edited by Sonja Eismann, 2007); the novel *Zuckerbabies* ("Sugar Babies") by Kerstin Grether (2004); or the academic treatise *Popfeminismus! Fragezeichen!* ("Pop Feminism! Question Mark!", Kauer 2009).

But why the talk about "new" feminisms? While there are different viewpoints, researchers "concur that the new feminisms represent the views of a homogeneous and privileged group of women (most authors are white, well-educated and heterosexual), are neoliberal in outlook and characterised by a fierce repudiation of second-wave feminism, which is dubbed the 'old' women's movement" (Scharff 2011: n. p.). Only a few publications take a more critical and reflective stand towards this repudiation of second wave feminism and incorporate academic work and queer perspectives, such as the edited collections *Hot Topic* (Eismann 2007), *Female Consequences. Feminismus. Antirassismus. Popmusik* (Reitsamer and Weinzierl 2006) and *New Feminism: Worlds of Feminism, Queer and Networking Conditions* (Gržinić and Reitsamer 2008). In particular, the *New Feminism* anthology takes a distinctive approach to the term "new feminism" compared to the mainstream rejection of 1970s feminism and critical feminist and queer theory and politics: here it is used to revitalize the continuity of the women's movement by making new opportunities for action through various perspectives and viewpoints visible. In stark contrast to the mainstream neoliberal popular approach, the term "new" is taken up in order to address the effects of casualization, migration and the exploitation of the post-communist countries and the countries to address the South, which leads to a new type of social inequality between those who live within the "new Europe" and those outside this territory. The aim is to open up a productive field to describe, discuss and critique contemporary feminist debates around diverse living conditions and cultural and theoretical production by women from various parts of the world, as well as to strengthen political agency. However, such a critical and intersectional standpoint represents a lonely perspective in the mainstream reification, homogenisation and stereotypical portrayal of feminism with underlying homophobia, sexism and exclusionary norms (see Scharff 2011). In fact, Elisabeth Klaus found that nonfiction "new feminism" publications reveal a "strong conservatism that borders on and sometimes touches antifeminist posi-

tions" and are characterized "first by distancing itself from an older and presumably outdated feminism, secondly by a neoliberal self-celebration, thirdly by the lack of a critical social analysis and finally by an invariably heterosexual orientation" (Klaus 2008: 328). This begs the questions: Who can be, is allowed to, and should be an "alpha girl"? And who is extending this invitation? (See Hark and Villa 2010: 11). In *The Aftermath of Feminism* (2009), Angela McRobbie suggests an "undoing of feminism" in that feminist elements are taken up and are integrated into society and politics and a well-informed and well-intended approach to feminism appears to take place. However, by using the tropes of freedom, choice and empowerment in new ways in media and popular culture as an (empty) replacement for feminism, the real aim is to prevent the development of a new women's movement, and instead today we find "movements of women", she argues (see Hark and Villa 2010: 13). This can be clearly seen in the German debate on "new feminisms", as Hark and Villa indicate in the introduction to the German translation of McRobbie's book (entitled "Top Girls", 2010).

As has been mentioned, in the context of this "new feminisms" debate the term "pop feminism" is claimed by a few – such as Sonja Eismann or Kerstin Grether – who also have been criticized for its use. The term has also been used in connection with actors in the field of popular culture, such as Peaches or Lady Bitch Ray. Additionally, we have also found in our research that some feminist media producers in the German-speaking Europe make use of and see their projects in connection with a "pop feminism", such as *Missy Magazine* (since 2008). In the academic book *Popfeminismus! Fragezeichen!*, Katja Kauer argues that "pop feminism has to be considered as a new manifestation of feminism, which not only carries derogatory categorisations such as *feminism light*, but also such labels as 'postfeminism'" (Kauer 2009: 133, authors' translation). In *Hot Topic* the term "Popfeminismus" is used to describe a critique of popular culture using feminism as an instrument; furthermore, Eismann argues that the current generation has been socialized with popular culture to a much greater extent than previous generations. This, however, does not mean that (popular) culture is not a negotiated field; popular music, TV or advertising needs to be criticized with feminist methods just as much as laws legislation (Eismann 2007).

The blog *Mädchenmannschaft* is an example for "pop feminism" and a call for an update of a second wave feminism. Run by a collective of eight women and two men, who are all based in Germany, the blog was founded by the three authors of the book *Wir Alphamädchen*. In this book, we find a particular feminist self-conception of the *Mädchenmannschaft* collective. As one of the interviewed editors explains:

> Our aim is not to complain about the status quo in society; rather we want to point out to particular developments in society, no matter if they are positive or negative. But certainly, pop feminism is very important for us. [. . .] Second Wave Feminism really made things better for us as a younger generation but there is far too much the attitude of being a victim and of complaining and excluding men. Men are not perpetrators in general, they can be also feminists. We are very positive and we think that feminism makes life more beautiful.

The feminist self-conception of *Mädchenmannschaft* acknowledges that their feminism stands on the shoulders of the second wave feminist movement but that it cannot be based on separatism. Rather their feminism has to adopt what Genz and Brabon (2009, 158) call a "politics of ambiguity" that embraces tolerance, diversity and difference, breaking free from the identity politics of second wave feminism and rejecting any notion of a so called "victim feminism" which is attributed to second wave feminists. For Genz and Brabon a "politics of ambiguity" challenges the identity politics and the anti-popular and anti-feminine agenda of second wave feminism and so, they argue, it is one of the characteristics of third wave feminism. The bloggers of *Mädchenmannschaft* adopt some of the manners of third wave feminism, but they have not discarded the discourses of the second wave (for a discussion of further examples see Reitsamer 2012). They strongly locate themselves in the field of popular culture and understand themselves as powerful young actors who make feminism "more beautiful".

Conclusion: Feminist media thriving towards social change

In this article we have presented an overview of our empirical findings from the research project "Feminist Media Production in Europe". Taking Lievrouw's genre framework for alternative and activist new media as a guideline, we have analysed feminist media projects that are produced in on- and offline, grassroots and alternative contexts in relation to scope, stance, agency and action as well as to three discourses of feminism (see table 4). We have expanded her framework and applied it to feminist media produced specifically in a European context. In general, our study confirms previous research on alternative media and feminist media in particular in that they aim to challenge power structures and to transform social roles by producing "alternative" content and by reverting to a DIY-organized, alternative economy. While we were able to confirm the features of alternative and activist new media in Lievrouw's model in relation to feminist media in print and online – in that they are mostly small-scale, collaboratively produced, heterotopic, based on subcultural literacy, ironic, interventionist and perishable – we have added a particular *feminist* perspective and *European* perspective to this model and generally to the discussion on alternative and feminist media. While in our study most feminist media producers today position themselves in relation to second wave feminism, their strategies and the discourses they are involved in have changed: On the one hand networking occurs now on a much more virtual – and therefore transnational – level with the use of new and social media, which marks a major difference to the more local networks during second wave feminism. On the other hand, we have found that in the European context feminist media producers rarely refer to a third wave feminism – as it is widely discussed in the US – but are engaged in discourses on do-it-yourself feminism, in-

Table 4: Features of feminist media
Leah Lievrouw's genre framework for alternative and activist new media (2011) extended to feminist media production on- and offline

Scope	small scale:	collaborative:	
	• media types: mostly print media, blogs, electronic magazines; notable: use of various media types simultaneously and changes of medium • media by country: most published in Germany, UK, Spain, Poland, Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, Sweden • publishing frequency: Most print media quarterly, followed by irregular and biannual; online media irregular updates or frequent publishing mode • language: most monolingual, followed by bilingual, a few trilingual or more languages • use of social media platforms: most often Facebook, followed by Twitter and MySpace	• publishers: most published by collectives and groups, NGOs and independent women's organizations, individuals • tendency towards "new collectivism"	
Stance	heterotopic:	subcultural literacy:	ironic:
	• feminist media as counter-sites to the mainstream based on solidarity, exchange of ideas and experiences otherwise ignored by mainstream media	• feminist media producers require certain access to and knowledge of (sub)cultural codes, language and symbols • certain awareness and self-critical reflection of limitations in terms of access, distribution and audience	• especially in visuals (bricolages, collages) use of humour and irony • transportation of political messages and subversion of original meaning (often in zines and culture jamming)

Action & agency	interventionist: • interventionist aim either within the project itself or by encouraging interventions by others • media production as activist practice and "productive interventions" into social power relations • interventions on content and visual level and in relation to non-commercial DIY culture with a focus on bottom-up processes through "learning by doing" and "skill-sharing"	perishable: • short-lived, temporary, ephemeral	
Discourses on feminism	DIY feminism: • discourse esp. in English-speaking countries and among zine makers • feminist cultural activism based on doing-it-yourself and self-empowerment • central: anti-capitalist stance, building of an "alternative economy" with the aim of establishing horizontal, non-hierarchical structures; social change should be achieved through a radical critique of the neoliberal system and through alternative economies outside of a neoliberal exploitation logic	Intersectional perspectives of feminism: • taking up critique by women of colour and postcolonial feminists on the homogenisation of the category "woman" by white feminists of the second wave; acknowledgement of the anti-essentialism and multiculturalism associated with postmodernism • frequent drawing on the term "queer" and on queer theory in connection with intersectionality	Pop feminism ("Popfeminismus"): • specific discourse in German-speaking countries in the context of a "new feminisms" debate • situating feminist media in the field of popular culture

tersectional perspectives of feminism, and pop feminism (in the context of the German-speaking "new feminisms" debate). In their negotiation of (interrelated) feminisms, feminist media production becomes a discursive, interventionist space that is constantly re-negotiated, re-invented, and re-appropriated under neoliberal social, cultural and economic circumstances. Hence, in sum the most important contributions of our study to the field are (a) to provide a comprehensive overview on the diversity of feminist media production in Europe, (b) to give insights into how a younger generation of feminist media producers negotiate neoliberal changes in society and (c) how they take up existing feminist discourses and practices and connect them with their own experiences in different geographic contexts. (Table 4)

In this conclusion, we would like to take up the questions we have raised in the introduction: How does a younger generation of feminist media producers in Europe participate in society by producing print magazines, blogs and e-zines in grassroots, alternative contexts relating to new social movements? How do they engage in discourses on feminism(s), challenge the status-quo and effect social change?

Zine maker Nina Nijsten thinks that "zines are significant on both the individual level (for example a girl who finds empowerment in reading a grrrl zine or expresses herself in making one) and for social movements. They can and do play important roles in DIY feminist and anti-capitalist movements." In the context of media production, scholar Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi has found that "almost by dint of their existence alone, autonomous media controlled by women with women-defined output offer a challenge to existing hierarchies of power; when these media take up specific issues and campaigns, and align themselves with larger social movements, their political potential is significant" (1996: 234). Herein lies the biggest potential but also the biggest challenge for the larger feminist movement: feminist media (and activism) represent one of the most direct attempts "to change fundamentally the way people think" (Young 1997: 3). As Young has argued "Feminist publications seek to effect social change through propagating feminist discourse" (1997: 12–13). The aim of social transformation is well illustrated by Tea Hvala, blogger, zine maker and co-organizer of the Red Dawns festival in Slovenia:

> Whether you speak about individual acts of resistance, about organised struggles, about art projects, about self-managed social experiments, even about the invisible day and night dreaming that expand the mental space, all these things, in my view, are re-envisioning and transforming society (quoted in Chidgey 2009b).

We argue that feminist media need to be considered in a larger socio-economic and cultural context as they are an intricate part of feminist movements as new social movements. In the articulation of experiences and the struggle over symbolic control and maintenance of independence, a collective consciousness and identity can grow and emerge around common projects, as has been the case with the Love Kills collective in Romania:

By advocating revolution, by raising awareness, by questioning authority, by breaking the silence, I think that zines can have a meaningful effect. And maybe it has to be first in the individual, the one who is holding the zines in her/his own hands and starts rebelling her/himself against the oppressors; later on you can find other individuals who are rebelling and can "ally" and plot together. We started, for example, by publishing a zine a few years ago; later on the editorial group formed itself into an anarcha-feminist collective, and we were able, together, to put ideas into practice.

Such a process of personal and collective consciousness-raising and critical opinion-building can be a step toward community and political involvement and, ultimately, can initiate and lead towards cultural and social change. As Stephen Duncombe has pointed out, "the very activity of producing culture has political meaning. In a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us, [. . .] creating your own culture [. . .] takes on a rebellious resonance. The first act of politics is simply to act" (2002: 7). This takes us back to the strong interventionist aim of feminist media projects. As we have shown in relation to queer-feminist comics, they can be considered "productive interventions" in social power relationships thriving for a transformation of society.

Overall, feminist media production online and offline is characterized by a critical reflection of mainstream culture and society as much as an intervention into them. Feminist media is strongly embedded in the feminist movement as a new social movement, on the one hand, through its actors: the well-educated and creative participants as well as a collective, shared identity and meaning and symbolic production; and on the other hand through its action: informal, anti-hierarchical, social networks, the integration into everyday life, the widespread use of media and ICTs and "unconventional", creative, small-scale, decentralized action repertoires, and permanent, transnational campaigns (see Lievrouw's overview of characteristics of new social movements 2011: 48–49). While the key problem of translating feminist concerns from the micro, individual level to the meso and macro level of wider society – and specifically the enabling of broader social participation (e. g. due to a lack of available resources) – remains, truly, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty has said: "everyday feminist, antiracist, anticapitalist practices are as important as larger, organized political movements" (2003: 4).

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