

# **Learning how to play in a band**

Feminist intersectional action research of Srey's School of Rock in Cambodia

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Master's Thesis

Musicology

School of History, Culture and Arts Studies

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University of Turku

April 2023

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Master's Thesis

**Degree Programme in Media Studies, Musicology and Art History, Department of Musicology:  
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in Cambodia**

**Number of pages:** 64 pages, 2 appendices

This study is an action research about the music workshop for women, Srey's School of Rock, located in Cambodia. The focus in this study is to understand what can be learned for the benefit of the future of SSR from the observations that were conducted. To reach this understanding I ask these questions: Which ways did we find for teaching the instruments and band activities to participants, and what cultural aspects there were involved, as we were working in this certain location. The research material been collected in the workshop that was a pilot version of SSR in December 2016. The research material includes my fieldwork diary, pictures, videos, a short documentary and recording of the song done during the workshop. To make the study more broad, my supporting material includes some other types of research of Cambodian women.

In the workshop I was reflecting the ways of learning through learning styles of popular musicians. We saw it important to think about the principles of safe space. A safer learning environment with room for trial and error is crucial and a practice band offered mostly this kind of environment for the participants of this workshop. Feminist activism in Cambodia seems to contain specific issues. Women seem to find it more difficult to engage in recreational activities, due to assumptions about them and stricter codes of conduct. In the Cambodian context, it would be important to earn an income from playing music. In Cambodia, the revival of music culture can have a special meaning, due to the recent history.

As ways to develop the future SSR workshop, we could apply more of the life skills and peer directed learning, that already were present in the workshop. There would be benefits in cultivating this towards a more economically driven empowerment project, but to keep in mind the value of recreational activities as such. The tourism connected to this kind of workshop more strongly would bring mutual benefits for participants and for instructors, probably international. The interpreter would be needed, to make this even more empowering, and it should be also considered to make this partly or completely an online activity, to diminish the negative effects of flying. Also, it would be important to follow the results of empowerment and support participants as empowered agents. We should be more sensitive to different gender identities.

**Keywords:** women musicians, activism, DIY, Cambodia, empowerment, feminism

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## 1 Introduction

This master's thesis is an action research about the music workshop for women, Srey's School of Rock, located in Cambodia. I was organizing the workshop in December 2016. Cambodian music culture in South-East Asia is an interesting example of fusion of different music styles and the significance of popular music in different times. My study is strongly linked to global, intersectional feminism, feminist acts in music field, popular (rock) music of Cambodia (Mamula 2011), and DIY attitude (Bennett & Guerra 2019).

I ended up doing ethnographical fieldwork in Cambodia after studying the popular Khmer rock music culture of the country (Mamula 2011). I had already done a bachelor's thesis in musicology on the subject, in which I wrote about a band called Cambodian Space Project (Mäkinen 2016). The Cambodian Space Project, that I studied, was the project of Cambodian singer Kak Channthy and Julien Poulson, including Cambodian musicians and international visitors. I studied the reinvented music culture as well as the artistic agency of Kak Channthy. She, like most of the women in Cambodian music scene have been, was a singer. The band unfortunately does not exist anymore due to Channthy's tragic and sudden death in March 2018 (see Hunt 2018). My interest to study Cambodian music culture started as I saw the band in World Village festival of Helsinki in spring 2013 and ended up meeting the members first on my trip to Cambodia in 2015. Cambodian Space Project was reinventing the "Khmer rock" culture which was flourishing in Cambodia in 1960's, until the communist Khmer rouge destroyed big part of national traditions and history in genocide 1975–1979. (Sam 1994, Grant 2017, Mamula 2011: 19).

As a woman and musician, I have long been aware of the inequality that exists in music life, also pointed out by many studies (Cohen 1997, Green 1997, Whiteley 2000, Bayton 2003). According to Anna-Stina Jungerstam (2019) this problem of inequality is part of band culture in underground scenes and is affecting also how women are seen in big stages, for example festivals, and how their music is sold. This has motivated me to work and volunteer in associations and projects as Särö (former Girls Rock! Finland), FunNet and Sound Collective of Finland, that are working for the gender equality in the music scene. Somehow same kind of norms seem to be gender-related in many different cultures, the rules of not making too much noise and being "in the front" apply to women musicians universally (Björck 2012, Käpylä 2018). In Cambodia, there has been a restricting code of conduct for women, "chap srei" (see Jacobsen 2008) that is visible in the supporting literature I use.

The idea of this study's topic, Srey's School of Rock started, as I was travelling in Cambodia around the time when I wrote my bachelor's thesis and contacted Julien Poulson from Cambodian Space Project. In December 2015 (SSR Field notes 2016) I got a chance to meet him in Kampot, in southern Cambodia. Julien has founded a café and art centre KAMA (Kampot Arts & Music Association) in 2014. KAMA offers local people free art- and music activities. His partner, known as Kek Soon was running a restaurant and café in same facilities. Soon is an active entrepreneur working in tourism and hiring locals, especially women and girls in her restaurant, now located in the new facilities in Kampot. Connected to the feminist movements in Cambodia, that is one way to empower women in the ways that are the most profitable for them. In this study I will use first names of organizers and participants that I mention by name, to make referring to persons clearer.

We started planning the Srey's School of Rock -project, that could be conducted in the facilities of KAMA. I found out that it had been difficult to get women to participate in already existing art activities. I already had discussed with women working at the restaurant of KAMA about their roles and lives and their relationship to art. They also talked about the responsibilities of household work and workload that doesn't leave much free time for them. From these questions we developed the idea of Srey's School of Rock. Julien had already been planning a Rock School for Girls, and as there was need for cooperation, I was more than happy to hop onboard. We decided to name the workshop Srey's School of Rock, 'srey' meaning in Khmer, 'miss' and 'feminine' (Jacobsen 2008, Derks 2008). I said that I could make a master's thesis about this in a form of action research, material consisting of the fieldwork in the workshops that I also would be participating as an instructor. We got bassist Hollie Lewis to join our team, and we started making plans online during summer and autumn 2016.

The plan of Srey's School of Rock (referred as SSR from now on) turned out to be a ten-day workshop for women, focusing on rock music, aiming to provide Cambodian women a chance to participate in music activities. We aimed to raise awareness of issues in Cambodia by "nurturing and promoting talent with a focus on empowerment, self-esteem building and community engagement and showcasing the achievement of the school for an international audience" (SSR documentary 2016). Being an independent project, SSR was using a model of similar international projects, for example Girls Rock Camp Alliance (2023), aiming to provide a safer space to identify as musicians.

SSR was targeted especially for women in Cambodia, because they tend to find it more challenging to participate in leisure time activities. With the workshop, our team wished to promote better quality of life and build confidence in the women and help them to act as role models for others. In the context of Cambodia, I found out about the specific obstacles and challenges that they, or the future participants, would possibly have. Cambodia still has many norms and rules inflicting inequality especially for women of the country. It is important, as Derks (2008: 1) points out, to see Cambodia through some other lenses than genocide and consider Cambodian history from a feminist point of view (Jacobsen 2008) that is, how women's roles in the society have been and how they can be in the future.

### **1.1 Research questions**

My focus in this study is to understand what can be learned for the benefit of the future of SSR from the observations that were conducted in the methods of action research. To reach this understanding I ask these questions:

1. Which ways did we find for teaching the instruments and band activities to participants?
2. What cultural aspects there were involved, as we were working in this certain location?

These questions have been formed in the field by discussing with the material and have gotten their final form after the fieldwork. To make this effective as action research, I will open the topic through the questions I have formed. I have chosen the questions according to the events in the fieldwork, drawing from further material that I am using as a support to understand the field and the people in that certain place better. Even though this is a very specific case study, where I describe how things were in this certain workshop, I'm using supportive research to make the study more reliable.

My supporting material includes some other types of research of Cambodian women, using the empowerment discourse, to shed light on the lives of women there, mostly done on social sciences trying to map economic empowerment and building of communities. In the next chapter I'll open the theories behind the concepts that I'll be using, and some phenomena behind the themes of this work.

## 1.2 Theoretical background

The theoretical framework of the study relates to issues of gender and music, which have often been examined through the lens of women but should be considered also in relation to other marginalized groups. Although my research does not allow me to delve much into the reasons why there are fewer women musicians, it has been studied a lot. Next, I will go through research literature concerning rock genre and career possibilities for women musicians, feminism in the “third world” and especially in the context of Cambodia.

### 1.2.1 Music, gender, and career possibilities

Gendered aspects of music form a very broad, growing field of study as Laura Wahlfors (2021) writes. There’s a lot of literature and discussion about gender and music, and history-writing that focuses on women in music, of very different genres and times. Based on literature and my own experiences, there definitely seems to be common experience of gender’s influence. In my study I look at the theme through the efforts made for advancing gender equality and diverse gender roles in popular music scene in comparison to the given ones (see Frith 1978: 174–175, Whiteley 2000: 29, Leppänen 2007: 278). I’ll point out that the music field is not equal, which is clear through many initiatives that I’ve been part of, also considering the specific features of different music cultures of the world. Lucy Green has done research on learning methods of rock and popular musicians (2002) and gender in education (1997: 187), where teachers encourage students to different instruments and careers in music.

If gender is discussed, it is mostly referring to women, because men are easily seen as neutral, without gender’s effect on their actions or at least it being the default. Based on Simone de Beauvoir’s (2011 [1949]) classical thought of the “second sex”, in rock music sphere, as in almost all imaginable music genres, gender is handled separately, because in music women don’t seem to be the normal, but the Other. Writing about gender and music, I don’t want to forget the non-binary people who also can face similar kind of challenges and attitudes in music world as women (Kauppinen, Salminen & Haarala 2018, Särö 2023). For example, Vivien Namaste (2000) is including in the research on punk gender categories outside of women and men. Cambodian way of perceiving gender and sexual identity (UNPD, USAID 2014) or identity in general is somewhat different (Adams & Gillogly 2011: 13), depending on social relationships more than in Western culture. Following Judith Butler (1990), it can be

questioned, if there even is any common womanhood or common exclusion that can be connected to gender. I see the research on music and gender is relevant for everyone who is subjected as other, but I'm referring in this chapter mostly to women.

Rock as a music style is based on blues and jazz, that women have been part of since the beginning, in blues (Gaar 1993) and in jazz bands as instrumentalists (O'Brien 1996) but rock is also connected to the culture where women have been excluded and it is described even as the most sexist of music styles (Bayton 2003, Leonard 2007, Dougher 2016: 195, Marsh 2018: 89). Rock seems to be a very clear example of gendered music style because it is often linked to sexuality and masculinity (Knuuttila 1997, Koivisto 2004).

In the context of rock culture especially from 1960's, there is a statement of rock being a tool for free expression (Lähtenmaa 1989, Bayton 2003, Dougher 2016), but for example Sheila Whiteley (2000) and Marion Leonard (2007) have studied the narrow roles given for women in expressing themselves, the acceptable roles in 1960's being for example "one of the boys" or "mother figure" etc. (Whiteley 2000: 23, 29, 51). In fact, rock culture seems to be free only for certain kind of people. Stereotypes of rock musicians are still very strong, leaving narrow roles for women as performers and in rock lyrics, even in counterculture, where also female singer-songwriters have acted (Whiteley 2000: 23, 29). One of the bands that was shaking the gender roles in 1960's, was Indonesian Dara Puspita (Summerlin 2012), that can be seen having a political message, not through political lyrics, but through action (see Koskoff 2014: 32). In the late 1960s, women playing rock music was a revolution for not only Indonesian women, but for women across the globe.

In global popular music industry, based on literature and my empirical observations, looking at festivals and music industry, women are underrepresented. In Europe the Keychange Pledge (Keychange 2023) has been created to make the equality in music industry better. It has been most common and still is to see women in the role of a frontwoman, where outlook can have bigger role than the musical aspects, often deciding if women are "accepted" to the music business (see Green 1997, Lieb 2018, Saphan 2016). In a context of bands, sometimes women have been feeling left out without playing any other instrument (Bayton 2003: 88).

There have been numerous studies about music and gender in different cultures all over the world, focusing on women's roles and agency in different music styles, including "amateur" and "professional" musicians (Finnegan 2007: 12, Koskoff 2014). There are special issues with instruments and why they are considered suitable only for men (Koskoff 2014: 122, 129,



Bayton 2003). Leonard (2007: 96) writes about technical aspects and how they are often connected to gender. There are assumptions that women don't play any instruments. Additionally, studying the traditional music cultures, in some of Koskoff's study women can even have negative consequences for playing instruments (2014: 129). Koskoff (2014: 123) has made notions about undervaluing women's music making in ethnographic studies and discusses about expectations considering women and musical instruments, which leads to that in many cultures women don't seem to play the instruments or even have access to them.

Women entered punk culture in 1970's, when feminism had affected the consciousness of women and girls, and in the punk scene it became more common and allowed women to express themselves. There has been activism on this topic since 1970's and 1980's, for example in a form of music festivals arranged for women (Lähteenmaa 1989) and later the efforts of riot grrrl, referred as "movement", "community", "scene" or "network" (Leonard 2007: 117). "Young feminist punks and young women involved in related music and DIY cultures developed transnational networks to forge their political and cultural agendas -" in different parts of the world in early 1990's (Aapola, Gonick & Harris 2005: 21). Some slogans, such as "girl power" and ideas of riot grrrl were adopted by mainstream for more commercial purposes (Leonard 2007: 156), bringing feminism to the mainstream in the 1990's (Aapola, Gonick & Harris 2005: 25–32).

One of the initiatives to improve the equality in the music scene (Marsh 2018) are Girls Rock camps, originally arranged in USA inspired by riot grrrl and have been doing worldwide work on the topic ever since, (Girls Rock Camp Alliance 2023) strengthening the alliance of women in the field of music (Koivisto 2004: 49). Marsh (2018) and Singer (2006) describe the need for DIY camps, because music making should be demystified in many contexts, where women always must prove themselves to be taken as equal. The idea is to provide role models in music, and it raises from the tiredness of being always denied (Marsh 2018, Dougher 2016). Girls Rock Camp Alliance provides similar concept. Marsch has written:

Girls Rock Camps offer the potential to challenge the gendered power dynamics within the music industry by creating productive spaces that encourage accessibility, promotion of female and female-identified artists, and connection amongst girls and female professionals, as well as featuring women and female-identified persons as performers, instrumentalists, technicians, engineers, organizers, managers. (Marsch 2018: 89)

Griffin (2012) is pointing out amateurism and the DIY aesthetics of it, which is often appreciated in band music, such as rock and punk. The DIY aesthetics, being first the band,

then the skills, that can be developed with the support of the group (Bayton 2003: 81–86). Bennett (2018) is describing DIY as being against of commodified music industry and is also suggesting that DIY culture can provide new ways to pursuit careers, defined independently. DIY culture has also been quite egalitarian because of the lack of certain conventional requirements. In a spirit of DIY, there was an interest to make the SSR workshop independently, not being connected to Girls Rock Alliance. According to their web page (Girls Rock Camp Alliance 2023), there have been camps mostly in USA, Australia, Latin America, Europe, and Canada, but also in Japan and Mozambique.

## 1.2.2 Feminism and women's rights related to SSR

The category of women is not homogenous, as Butler has stated (1990) and the distinguishing markers, such as different backgrounds, have also been present in GR!A initiatives. Nguyen (2012: 190-191) states that it is important to address the whiteness of Riot grrrl - movement's history and the ignorance of other voices that have contributed it by providing criticism and through participation. Aapola, Gonick & Harris (2005: 32-35) present the critique that has been brought up concerning the race-question of riot grrrl. As noted in previous chapter, the concept of woman is already problematic, and even though there is a lot of literature of common experiences for women in music, every experience is constructed in a unique way.

Although it is important to note, that not all the activities targeted to and organized by women are feminist, this project has explicitly feminist values. Feminism, in short, is a concept that has, in the form it is understood currently, emerged first from women's movements organized by suffragettes in 19th century Europe (Harding 2008: 14), where also some international acts were initiated (Rupp 1997) and has later had multiple different goals, often divided to first, second and third wave. My study is mostly based on the thoughts from second and third wave feminisms. The second wave has highlighted the women in the centre, starting from women separatism, the slogan "personal is political", and standpoint feminism. Since already from the very beginning of feminism, today the transnational movements are even more common (Rupp 1997, Sandell 2015). They are aiming to build solidarity and activism between very different groups, dealing with intersectional and global issues that are connecting, but also dividing women.

In the 1960's and 1970's all the international movements (Rupp 1997, Roces 2010:1) affected strongly everywhere. Feminism in Asia has developed partly parallel with western women's movements, but had emphasized different things, sometimes even juxtaposed with Western

issues (Roces 2010). Feminism is a term that has sometimes been avoided in Asia (Roces 2010: 1) and instead of feminism described as definitions of improving women's lives. Also, feminism as a word, according to Jacobsen (2010: 219) doesn't even exist in Khmer language, closest expressions being "working for women" and "women's rights". Every country and its oppression of women has been very different, and every individual has their own intersecting qualities that affect how they are treated (see Butler 1990, Mohanty 2004). When applying feminist agendas, this is a problem often faced in transnational movements, which means ideas and actions travelling worldwide.

### 1.2.3 Cambodian context in music and politics

Cambodia has a tragic and political history with its popular music. I have studied the history of Cambodia from the point of view of music, through documentaries and stories of individuals who witnessed the horrible events, connected to the common knowledge of the past. I found out about the culture of Cambodia and the times of horror because they have been in focus lately also in Western countries as the revival of culture which was silenced in the genocide (see Mamula 2011). The history has touched western audiences through a documentary of the music culture, *Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock'n'Roll* (dir. Pirozzi 2012) and the movie *First They Killed My Father* (dir. Jolie 2017), based on the co-writer Loung Ung's book with same name (Ung 2000).

These documentaries, especially Pirozzi's, present the connections of Cambodian genocide's effects on the culture, which also Mamula (2011) and Saphan (2016) describe. *First they killed my Father* describes the genocide from the point of view of a child in all its horror. The wealthy middle-class, not used to hard physical work in the countryside had to give up their homes in cities as well as all their belongings to start a life in slavery. Cultural entertainment could not be fitted in this era and as most of the people working in the art scene or academics were executed (Mamula 2011). The genocide lasted 1975–1979 and after that started the war, which lasted until 1993 (Jacobsen 2008, Mamula 2011).

Related to the historical events of this place, in Cambodia music has a special meaning. Cambodian music culture is an example of how any kind of music, not only traditional can mark an important part on an era of a nation and bring back collective memories, feeling of belonging and own distinctive culture and identity. Even though there is rich traditional music culture in Cambodia, I am not doing this research on it. In this study the interest was to keep the local popular music alive, as a reinvented tradition (see also Kallio & Westerlund's 2015).

Western pop music often feels more relevant in young Cambodians' lives (Grant 2017, Sam 1994). Stephen Mamula has studied Cambodian popular music culture and its reinvention after the genocide and war era, a cultural change consisting of new technology and the old traditions, called "re-indigenizing" (2011: 21), since in the genocide 90% of the artists were destroyed. As seen in Pirozzi's documentary, art's potential to affect people was seen dangerous among the other internationally and intellectually influenced culture and a lot of effort was put into destroying it. Mamula (2011: 27) describes the inevitable gap that the genocide caused (see Kallio & Westerlund 2015). There are lots of interventions trying to reinvent it. Culture Café KAMA, where our workshop was located, is one act of reinventing the music and art of Cambodia and let the culture recover.

Khmer rock is influenced by Anglo-American popular music, which respectively has taken influence from all over the world (Mamula 2011: 24). Cambodian popular music in general in dance bands also takes influence from different parts of the world (Shepherd, Horn & Laing 2005: 168-69, Saphan 2015) and as Mamula describes, the local traditional music instruments were used in 1960's, also with Western instruments. Ornamental singing is also often used in this musical fusion, the instruments adding to the popular music the local vibes.

#### 1.2.4 Empowerment in Cambodia

Cambodia as a country has one of the world's lowest GDP (Globalis 2023) and as such it is a different field to operate than for example Finland, where my other experience of this kind of work is. Its nationwide challenges, partly caused by the genocide and recent conflicts and the consequences of them, are affecting especially women, also preventing the grass-roots feminism to grow, according to Jacobsen (2010: 208, Gardner 2020). Problems like human trafficking and prostitution, violence in households and moral standards and requirements for women are among the most severe. One big example of discriminating human rights is textile industry in Cambodia, that is mentioned in a report (UNIFEM, WB, ADB, UNDP & DFID/UK 2004). Many empowerment projects in Cambodia aim to end violence both by educating men and women (Jacobsen 2008, Pearson 2011) to get rid of old beliefs and especially "chap srey", the traditional code of conduct for women. The country is still recovering from the genocide and a war after that but is developing quite fast (Globalis 2023). It is also very popular amongst tourists, which is a way for lifting the country's economy and culture (Carter, Thok, Rourke, Pearce 2015: 799).

The term *empowerment* means that a person feels being capable of doing something. It's a process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you (Cambridge Dictionary 2023) is nowadays very commonly used term in many different contexts. As Parpart (2002: 41) describes, empowerment has become a “motherhood” term in improving the poor's lives and it started from NGOs as a metaphor for fundamental social transformation. In early black feminist movement empowerment's importance for community is to give voice to discriminated, as Patricia Hill Collins (1991) points out. In Cambodia there have been empowerment projects for women where the economic independence, (Chhay 2011) and empowering communities (Ward & Mouyly 2013, Sovann 2014) have been built.

Empowerment of women is a concept that is very often used when talking about simply goals of feminism or gender equality. UN has defined the need for empowerment of women in the Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals in equality:

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. (UN 2018)

The empowerment is suggested to lead to a wider development of the whole society:

“Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world. (UN 2018)

I ended up using the concept of empowerment from many different paths, mainly because my study is about women acting in music, in which they are still marginalized, and because of the location of the fieldwork. It is always appearing in the context of rock camps for women, for example in the literature concerning Girls Rock camps, organized in USA and Europe, as well as in other countries like Mozambique. It seems already to be a sort of conceptual default. I also would naturally use empowerment in the plans and slogans of this workshop, but it must be rethought critically beforehand. In Girls Rock context it seems to be as knowing your own rights and acting freely no matter what one's background is. One of these camps (Singer 2006) had in its goals to give the participant tools to express themselves and defend themselves and speak out. Marsh describes in the article of Girls Rock Regina:

When asking the organizers, band coaches, instrument teachers, and volunteers why they became involved with GRR, a common response was what they saw as a real need for more girls and women to feel empowered to take part in the various music scenes, and when participating, to feel like their contributions mattered and were valued. (Marsh 2018, 91)

The sense of empowerment would happen when women really have the agency to work properly in the scene and have full possibility to use the knowledge that they have.

### **1.3 Research material and its relation to previous studies**

I collected my data in fieldwork that was a pilot version of SSR in December 2016. The research material (SSR Field notes 2016) includes organizer's discussions, itineraries and notes before the workshop, my fieldwork diary, also including notes from some open interviews on the field, pictures, and videos by me, other organizers, and participants. A short documentary and a recording of the song done during the workshop are accessible on Youtube (SSR documentary 2016, Sou Sou 2016) and I also use these as part of field notes, especially the footage of the workshop and comments of participants, given in the documentary. I also continued discussions with the organizers online after the workshop to discuss development of the future workshops, and I'm using these as part of my material (SSR Online Field notes 2019). The research material is stored in my archives.

I have noticed that more and more studies on the topic gender and music and more initiatives within the field have been emerging after the research done by Bayton (2003) and Green (1997). Bayton's (2003) and Green's (2002) research of popular music bands are the base for my topic, as they have been researching the women's instrument choices and chances to choose freely how they would make music. More recently, Björck (2012) and Käpylä (2018) have also been studying the leisure time activities, and difficulties to find own place as woman in the music scene. I'm using Green's (2002) research on methods that popular musicians use for learning the songs, such as peer directed learning and learning by listening and copying.

My material is an intervention of women and music, connected to Cambodian situation of women's rights and Cambodian history, being an art project dealing with inequality of the gender roles in popular music, and special challenges of woman musicians. The interest is in how to overcome the challenges, focusing on gendered aspects of music activities, combining the empowerment and participatory ethnomusicology. My study is an action research for improvement for this activity.

#### 1.4 Fieldwork methods for action research

My research is action research, and as such a qualitative study (Eskola & Suoranta 1998). It is implemented with fieldwork methods and phases of ethnographic participatory observation (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004). The study is data-driven but drawing from theories and similar interventions focusing on women's music and it also is in touch with theory, as I rely on theories such as postcolonial research and gender studies theories (Butler 1990).

Action research (Heikkinen 2010) is especially meant to have influence, which is not always explicit in ethnographies. Aiming to simultaneously develop and research social activities, action study is a strategic approach using different kinds of methods as tools, making it possible to evaluate, how the project was done. The language makes the processes of action visible, as the practical means and the philosophy behind it are combined. I am utilizing this creative use of methods, to get more accurate answers to the questions that I found the most useful for the action study, also applying some aspects from previous studies and seeing how ethnography is in constant change. In this aspect my study also resembles participatory ethnomusicology (Moisala & Seye 2013). Our project was also discussing between the material and theory. In action study the good would come instantly, but also through the writing process.

The study is about a project that I was part of, based on different experiences and theories I wanted to implement. Following the idea of critical participatory activist research (Suoranta, Ryyänen 2014: 15–16), I was trying find out how things are but also how they could be changed. “Rebellious research” is the umbrella term for a study that has a vivid relationship to society's actions, belief that things can be changed (Suoranta & Ryyänen 2014: 111) as “theoretical work and the potential of social movements”. This study and the case in it are very typical for feminism that has a history of balancing between activism and theory (Ackerly & True 2010). Srey's School of Rock can be categorized as activism and in my study, I'm trying to analyze it through feminist theories and in that way develop the forms of activism we are committing to.

This was an intense learning for the researcher too, as Gould (2016: 12–13) has described, included adaptation of habits and nuances. Since I was an active member in the whole project that I am studying, *reflectivity* has such an important part, as in action study it always is (see Heikkinen 2010). I never was this close to Cambodian's life before, meaning that I must be careful in how to present the informants here and that's why I additionally wanted to study

other material, covering restrictions that can affect participants in this certain situation. Reflectivity in my study is shown as I acknowledge the contextual background, explaining the circumstances that were present in the moment of fieldwork and later. As Uusihakala (2016: 96) describes, even though my topic was chosen because of own interest, it was also a unique possibility and happened with the help of contacts.

To get the fieldwork documented, I wrote fieldwork diary (SSR Field notes 2016). I am focusing on the development of our project by reflecting the data that was collected in the field and using supportive literature to get the best possible picture of the topic. Personal experience and emotions are also important, giving intuitive knowledge. My conceptions have also changed through the process of writing, so I can see myself as a little bit different person than what I was. Since the fieldwork, I have been teaching a lot more, and of course gained more knowledge about Cambodia and other cultures.

### **1.5 Ethics of the study**

As writing about this topic, it really matters what kind of stories I present, because a case study can affect how Cambodian women are seen in general. I have engaged in the principles of Finnish global education associations such as Taksvärkki ry and Maailmankoulu. According to them, by paying attention on the writing style we can avoid eurocentrism or help discourse where global south would be always in the need of outside help.

Julien Poulson and Kek Soon worked as the key informants in accessing the field and making of the workshop already before and on the first days of workshop. With participants, we had a proper starting discussion only on the third day of the workshop as all participants and both I and Holly were present. Further on we had more talks, where we shared everyone's opinions about what we had been doing, wishes and other feedback, because we wanted to keep the workshop as interactive as possible. This master's thesis is written in English to make it accessible to the persons who were involved and participate in the action study and development of this study. The question of sustainability of travelling I will reflect on in the end of this work.

As I am familiar with "The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland" (Kohonen, Kuula-Luumi & Spoof 2019), I follow these principles in this study. To make sure that participants took part in SSR from their own interest, we wanted to create an environment, where it was possible to join and leave



whenever they wanted and attend according to their own schedules and motivation. Still, they were chosen so that it was possible to organize the workshop where they were travelling from nearby places. Following the ethical guidelines of a researcher (Kohonen, Kuula-Luumi & Spoof 2019), I also asked for their permission for using the pictures and the field work material in my master's thesis, which everyone agreed. The challenge in discussions was that four of the participants didn't speak English at all or spoke very little. We trusted Soon, who took responsibility of translating everything. Of course, the message can always change during the translation process. Therefore, I couldn't make very comprehensive interviews with no common language or understanding. I trying to interpret my field diary only putting emphasis on how they talk about music.

I reflect with the writings on common level without personification and will use it for the developing of SSR in future better for the participant's interest and needs. I am careful with revealing any private information. The participants might be recognized in the pictures in this thesis where you can see them playing, even though I have blurred their faces. In the analysis I only discuss themes on common level that still answers my research question. Following Freire's (1970) idea of studying upwards, I try to learn how things are with them, therefore some things outside music must be covered. I have considered, what is the use in research compared to even the slightest risk that it would do some damage. It would be questionable to point out their personal experiences and everyday troubles since the workshop's location would possibly reveal their identities. The participants agreed on being in pictures, and even that their names could be used, but I decided to keep their anonymity because revealing of the identities wasn't necessary. As the documentary of SSR was published, the anonymity of participants can't be fully reached, which is often the case in distinctive action or place (see Kohonen, Kuula-Luumi & Spoof 2019).

Following Suoranta & Rynnänen (2014), I can use my own position for the benefit of the project of locals, not drawing from my own needs, but acknowledging my position as a researcher and taking benefits of it for the common goal. I am making interpretations of what we did together and this I'm doing as a western student in the fieldwork of music workshop in Cambodia. As a researcher being part of the organizing team, I had a role typical for action study (Heikkinen 2010), which I am also being sensitive with, following the ethical principles (Kohonen, Kuula-Luumi & Spoof 2019: 9). In the research material my own memories and emotions play quite a big role and my interpretations of it can change through times. I am storing the material in my archives to have access to it throughout the study and after it.

Reflective analysis makes the power structures visible. This is my independent work and none of the organizers or participants must commit to how I have analysed the workshop.

Because of social media, I have not left the field completely, meaning I have been in touch with the field continuously via internet. This has made focusing on the fieldwork timeframe challenging, but it has also brought quite relevant and current aspects into my study, seeing the organizers' and participants' everyday posts on social media. It made me ponder about our level of mutual trust during the fieldwork. How much was I trusted? What kind of things was I allowed to know? The opinions and people might change through times.

To shed light on women in the music context and tell encouraging example of learning in our workshop, I want to describe Cambodian women's lives with the possible difficulties and problems, but without victimizing and not considering the Western feminist ideas superior, reflecting the informants through its lens. Spivak (1988) has also written about the danger of speaking for someone, which may lead to misinterpretations and misconceptions. One of the complex things has been, how to write about the extremely unique and interesting persons truthfully. Playing and practicing music shouldn't be a condemning activity. On the other hand, making music and art in the context of Cambodia you never know what could happen in their futures, with their background of activist and feminist music making.

I think general knowledge of women's life in Cambodia is important in understanding the point of view of those participants a bit better. I find the study more informative when talking about the specific things in this location on common level. In case study it would be interesting and important to focus on personal life experiences, but this common level serves the action study better and I find it ethically more convincing. As I'm aware of the problematic friendship on the field (see Järviluoma 2013), I am keeping the focus on the general level.

The workshop was also mapping the interest and finding out if there is a need for activism, trying to find results from below, even though it might not be what we originally had thought about. Since SSR worked as the pilot version with an itinerary for a workshop, we couldn't articulate a very clear goal or organize everything aiming to reach that goal. Mapping the situation in Cambodia, related to local and global feminism currently and in history was the expected result of the pilot workshop.

The aims of feminism have been criticized about tending to be Eurocentric and seeing other continents in a subordinate position to Europe (Vuorela 1999). The orient “Other” is also victimized in Western feminism (Yuval-Davis 1997: 118, Rantonen 1999: 41). In the kind of context that I have in this research, I want to avoid ending up to the continuum of Western feminism trying to emancipate other womanhood (see Vuorela 1999: 22–23, Mohanty 2004). (Post)colonialism inside feminism has also been criticized by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2004). According to Mohanty it’s problematic, when Western feminists are trying to ”help” and set the goals from their own position and point of view, instead of working in solidarity with so called third world women. Third world has in the Western views often had a stigma of being left behind, underdeveloped, often meaning in economical way and by capitalist means (Harding 2008). All countries are in constant change, moving to their own directions. Often cultures in the global south, are seen as static and unchanging while cultures in west would be in constant change and developing all the time (Harding 2008). When Western feminists fail at discovering the change, Western scholars write about third world or global south, in a colonizing way. According to Mohanty (2004), it seems impossible to find oppression and struggles that all women go through and there wouldn’t be any universal patriarchal framework that must be resisted.

## **2 Learning how to play music in Srey's School of Rock**

In this chapter I describe how we tried to achieve the goals that we had set and how the participants of Srey's School of Rock were learning to play instruments during the ten days of the workshop. I describe how the workshop, which was the material for this study, was possible despite some challenges that occurred, such as language-barriers and scheduling. I refer to my field notes, including fieldwork diary, pictures and videos and open interviews on the field, also using the comments of the participants documented by Julien (SSR documentary 2016). I also refer to some Skype and Facebook messenger -conversations that we (organizers) had before the actual workshop (SSR Fieldnotes 2016).

First, I describe how I prepared the field work, how I entered the field, how our workshop begun and how we got started with the teaching. I am aiming to answer, which ways did we find for teaching the instruments and band activities to participants. I describe how the learning of each instrument happened by combining the data with mainly the theories of Green (2002) and using the ideas of feminist pedagogy, that is drawing from feminist theories (Laukkanen, Miettinen, Elonheimo, Ojala & Saresma 2018).

Finally, I make remarks about singing and song writing in the workshop as well as issues around being a band member and part of the community of Srey's School of Rock, getting a unique message expressed though the performing of original songs, and meaningful covers. I focus on the benefits of a practice band and what constrains there can be for women (see Bayton 2003: 27-47) to join music activities. I present alternative and community-based ways of learning and the principle of safer space and the learning styles of popular musicians (Green 2002). I will describe, why it would be relevant to have activities separately for women, and how to be sensitive about the different realities we all were living in, creating a safer space.

### **2.1 How the SSR workshop started**

The access to field (Moisala & Seye 2013) opened to me already at the time of my first trip to Cambodia and was preliminary confirmed, as Julien Poulson, whom I had interviewed for my bachelor's thesis in Kampot at the facilities of KAMA (Kampot Arts & Music Association) in December 2015, contacted me and Holly Lewis in a Facebook group discussion. I got to know that Holly had been playing bass in Cambodian Space Project on tour and in studio. They had discussed about making of a music workshop, which I also earlier had been

discussing with Julien, with preliminary interest. I planned to write my master's thesis about the workshop.

We talked about wider promotion and fundraising for the workshop, and I also applied funding from Finnish institutes and some international grants, but since it wasn't successful yet, this workshop ended up being a pilot version, where the participants were gathered among the friends of the organizers in Cambodian end. Luckily, we had enough of interested ones already based in Kampot, since we couldn't provide accommodation for those who would come from other cities, which also was planned at first. Me and Holly had self-financed all that we needed for travelling to Kampot and staying there; flying tickets, bus tickets, tuk-tuk rides, food, and accommodation, and entered the country with a tourist visa, since this project was only short time voluntary work that we didn't get paid for.

Big advantage was that the instruments that we needed were already at KAMA, where they had been used for gigs and rehearsals since KAMA's art activities begun in 2014. The facilities and instruments that KAMA provided were very crucial, since participants of SSR didn't have any own instruments. When pondering around the concrete and more structural obstacles for music making faced by the participants, compared to what Bayton (2003) has listed, a very common one is economic side. Bayton (2003: 27–29), mentions how accessing equipment is often problematic for beginners and the material constraints are often a threshold especially for women.

We had contact in a Facebook group for planning team and Facebook messenger group discussions (SSR Field notes 2016) since 1st of June 2016 until November as I started my travel from Finland. I met Holly in Bangkok on 25th of November and Julien in Phnom Penh a few days later. During the travelling we wanted to raise the team spirit, share our thoughts of rock music, and make a bit more planning, while also getting to know each other and our interests for this workshop.

The actual fieldwork started in Kampot, as I entered KAMA on the 1st of December and started to discuss and plan the workshop with Kek Soon, the co-owner of KAMA facilities, which included her café and restaurant and room for making visual art and exhibitions. This would work as our venue throughout the workshop. There were a few young women around, some of them going to be participants in the workshop. Most of them were part of a community, working at Soon's café, where they got experience and mentoring for work and entrepreneurship, as well as a safer place to hang out. Soon started by telling me some details

about the participants that we were going to have altogether six, including her. Participants had all quite different backgrounds. To our knowledge, they were from 17 to 30 years old, most of them around in their twenties, identified as women or other. In Cambodia the gender and sexuality are not talked about as separate things and are perceived in a different manner than what I for example am used to in Western context of gender studies (UNPD, USAID 2014). I have now chosen to refer to all the participants with the pronoun she, because srey, feminine was the essentialist target group. I will elaborate this in the last chapter (3.4).

As the interaction with the participants started, it seemed that the whole workshop was going to be quite freely scheduled, and the times when everyone would be there at the same time were rare. I was alone on the first day and started breaking the both-sided excitement by discussing with the participants about what kind of music they like. In online discussions with the team there were plans of timetables and other practical issues, such as everyone's contribution in the actual workshop. Referring to our plans, a day was planned to look like for example: "Morning meeting to present ideas, one on one tutorials in morning, jam sessions afternoon" (SSR Field notes). In the real situation we had to change the plan many times, according to the situation at the café. This follows the unstructured pattern typical for an action study, where the activity is shaped already during the process (see Heikkinen 2010).

Soon herself was running the café at KAMA as well as organizing food tours for tourists and often participants were working in these occasions, too. We had activities according to their working times, at the café or elsewhere. A couple of participants were attending school in daytime hours and one participant was working elsewhere through all weekdays and could only participate during the two weekends that our workshop included. The itinerary (Attachment 2) that had been preliminary planned, based on Girls Rock camps that I had been part of and plans that me and Holly had made at an online meeting (SSR Field notes 2016), wouldn't work here. The instrument teaching became more like a pop-up workshop since it was difficult to gather everyone to the same place at a same time.

Instead of strictly following an itinerary, learning started to happen in a very spontaneous way, and it turned out that we were going to be the main teachers of every instrument, which worked very well for this purpose. We both knew how to show the basics of chords and guitar strumming rhythms, and that knowledge was also shared along by participants themselves. Soon had been taking some guitar lessons that Jason Shaw had previously had at KAMA, and she extended her role to a guitar mentor along with working as a translator between the

organizing team and participants. We had been planning that my main responsibility would be to teach the drums, and Holly would be responsible for teaching the bass, and there would have been an extra team member teaching guitar. According to Green (2002), learning to play popular music often happens through peer-directed learning, which was the way we started to work, too. The learning process happened both ways, on the other hand the participants played us their favourite Khmer songs and me and Holly practiced and figured out how to teach them.

My own background in music and teaching at the point of fieldwork consisted of popular music education at elementary school and self-driven practice. The base for my skills in instruments came from music lessons, that I had participated actively since early school age, which is common in Finland, where most children have chance to play and practice music from early age (see Kallio & Partti 2013). I've also been lucky to be able to also try instruments, like drums since age of eight or nine. I had been a member of several bands, as a singer and drummer or both and had been making music also in singer-songwriter style with acoustic guitar and piano. I have learned how to function in a band through my own projects and I have often written my own music through improvisation and learning from recordings and other musicians on gigs, but also taken some lessons in drums, guitar, piano, singing, and music theory. Different listening styles in long-term music learning process, named as purposive, attentive, and distracted listening by Green (2002: 24), describe well how I have gained the skills I have. That turned out to be a natural way of learning in our workshop.

I had no formal music teacher education, but the most important experience for this workshop I had gained at Girls Rock! Finland band camps, where learning and teaching happen within a community. I had worked in July 2016 as a drum and band coach on a GR!F band camp, where I learned ways to teach the basics of drums for beginners, that time for women and non-binary from 25 to 40 years of age. That kind of learning is very close to what Green (2002: 76) calls peer-directed learning and describes it happening through “casual encounters and organized sessions”, where “musicians watch and imitate each other as well as more experienced players—”. Through such interaction they copy and exchange ideas, knowledge, and techniques, and learn to play together, by making covers, improvisation, and compositions of original music”.

Holly's background was in social work, and she had also been playing bass in many bands, as a studio and tour musician. She also is self-taught musician and based on the experiences of

Girls Rock concept activism I've been part of, the literary and our discussions about starting to play, we both taught the instruments basically in a same way we ourselves had learned to play them. In this place this was perfectly happening in casual encounters of the workshop.

Other persons in the team, Julien, Jason, and Gillian Docherty helped with technology, shooting, and documenting the workshop (SSR Field notes 2016). For the last days of workshop, we had singer Lou Thy and music and sound producer Sintung Hama supporting the workshop and working as informants of being Cambodian women in music industry. Hama told in a spontaneous interview how she's the only woman at the faculty where she studies sound-engineering and how she is taking her own career path. She lifted the group spirit by attending and dealing with the recording, with very good energy. She also had touch of the instruments, along with the recording programs, which she took care of with Jason. Soon had a big role, in music and practical issues, as presented.

The participants themselves were the ones who made the workshop happen and contributed a lot to how it turned out. They, especially Participant 1, were very eager to play music from a mobile device and danced with it and sang along. That made the atmosphere relaxed and easier to start music making spontaneously. Following the principles of Freire (1970), I tried to avoid the teacher-student hierarchy, which many of the participants seemed to think existed, calling me a teacher.

It was a bit open how and with what songs we would start, but that initiative also came from participants. Their taste of music and interests were close to what Sam Ang-Sam (1994: 44) and Grant (2014) have written about music culture among new generation in Cambodia. Western style rock and pop music, usually sang in Khmer, seems to be very big part of their everyday lives and they'd really like to learn to play them with the band instruments, too. To my knowledge, these participants didn't have experience of those instruments, or Cambodian traditional instruments. Like Sam (1994) describes, traditional Khmer music no longer is so important for youth and seen more like tradition than music that is consumed in everyday life. These participants might have had a bit different relationship to Khmer rock music since at KAMA that music style is strongly reinvented, also in cooperation with folk musicians.



## 2.2 Learning how to play band instruments

The basic band instruments, that we also taught in the workshop, normally are drums; providing the rhythmic patterns, bass, guitar and often keyboard or piano; making the harmonies, but also important in rhythm (Whiteley 2000, Green 2002, Bayton 2003). This I describe and analyse by reflecting the ways of learning through Lucy Green's (2002) concepts of peer-directed learning and learning by listening and copying. Comparing with Girls Rock camps, and Bayton's (1990) article of women musicians, I'm also pointing out some gender specific notions that I made in the learning and teaching processes. We had everything that we needed in the facilities of KAMA, a few guitars, both electric and acoustic, a drum set, keyboard and microphones, amplifiers, as we had been told, but at first, bass was missing.

To start teaching the drums, at KAMA there was a ready drum set, consisting of the basic parts, hi-hat, snare drum, bass drum, three tom-toms, crash, and ride cymbal as described in the handbook for a band, that has been edited by Kauppinen, Salminen & Haarala (2018). In my fieldwork diary I describe how Participant 1, who was working at KAMA café on the first day of workshop, asked me to show some things with drums. I was informed earlier by Julien and Soon that the participant had been very eager to play drums already for some time before the workshop. She played me from her phone some Khmer songs that she would like to learn to play. As a very lively and brave person she didn't need very much encouraging to start, instead she encouraged me to start teaching even though I hadn't prepared any proper plan yet, and the teacher-student dichotomy already started to blur (see Freire 1970). I started teaching in a way which Green (2002: 64) describes as listening and copying way of learning. I helped her to listen to the drum tracks and try to repeat what she was hearing.

In a video clip that Kek Soon shared on social media as a live video, I am beginning the drum session with Participant 1. She wants to learn a beat for her favourite song, and I try mostly without common language, using English, some Khmer that I had learned, and non-verbal communication show how the bass drum work with right foot on first and third measure and how to hit snare drum with left hand on the second and fourth measure. That follows Green's (2002: 61-70) style of musicians trying to hear what's played on a record. Because our participants possibly never had had a touch to drum set before, to co-practice and give some ideas gives a good beginning.

After that session Participant 1 took a long time to practice what I had told her. She practiced disciplined throughout the week and made good results in learning process. She played along

a record, tried to keep the rhythm, and succeeded very well in that. A common way of learning for many musicians described by Green (2002: 61–64) is purposive listening and copying, where learning of, for example drums happens through listening to music a lot and concentrating on what drummer does in each piece. That worked for Participant 1 very well, as in my experience for many drummers. At least for Participant 1, who seemed to be very much into music and was listening to it all the time, that method could work well. She learned to distinguish very well where the bass drum and snare were going, and I helped her to count with the rhythm.

In Green's (2002: 65) study not every drummer counts in their head but usually it's seen to help keeping the music together, at least in my experience of teaching. I learned that one-two-three-four is "muy-bee-bai-bun" in Khmer and used also that phrase very often during the practices. It seemed that the main challenge for Participant 1 was to get a picture how to use drums to keep the basic rhythm in the songs, even when wanting to improvise more, since in my field notes it is seen how I often helped in counting with clapping hands or other stuff. Learning of drums happened with many informants of Green (2002) in a very similar way to which we were working with Participant 1, the difference being me working as mentor in the personal learning process, while drummers in Green's interviews said they had made alone (2002: 62).

I also used the same teaching method for others who wanted to learn. Participant 5 wanted to learn as she was free from her work on the weekend, she didn't have so much time to practice. We started with the same practices as with Participant 1, trying the basic beat. Most of the participants wanted to try the drums and they all succeeded in keeping the main beat at least for a while. Getting better was only a matter of practice, but sometimes the participants wanted to repeat some drum things at the same time Holly was teaching the others guitar or bass. For practical reasons it wasn't possible to play drums at the same time with other teaching. That was because we had only one room for practicing and even going out on the balcony didn't help because drums were so loud.

In the later days of the workshop, I started to go further in the idea of drum fills. I used the same method I had been using earlier as teaching in informal situations, including Girls Rock! Finland -workshops and figuring it out by myself. I emphasized how important it is to keep counting from one to four all the time in your head, allowing the improvisation to happen so

that the other players can follow. Keeping the beat makes the drummer the “bottom” of the band, as Green (2002) also describes..

With guitar, on the first day I also started repeating the chords for guitar with Soon. We drew a paper which was showing the guitar neck and how the chords were in it. Soon started to practice chord changes which she already knew quite well and named some songs she would like to learn in the workshop. For her it seemed to be easy because she had been participating in the guitar workshop that Jason used to have regularly during previous year. Participants 2 and 3, who were working at the café, started to practice the chords with Soon. I was also helping them occasionally. In pictures I took from learning situations, there are usually participants showing each other how to play some chord or change the chord. Picture 1 shows, how they are sitting around a table with guitars, showing each other how to play the chords. During the week we often had some practices where they learned to recognize the name of a chord and change from chord to another as well as trying to stick to common rhythm with exercise of chord changes.



*Picture 1 Learning the guitar chords together. Picture: Paula Mäkinen*

The peer-directed learning named by Green (2002) worked well as they were correcting each other, trying to remember where to place left hand fingers in each chord. Soon was a big help in guitar teaching and in that way, she was more in a peer teacher's role with guitar and at the same time part of peer-directed learning at our workshop in a wider scale. That way the workshop even more clearly turned out to happen in a community where everyone was sharing their skills with others. Also, a participant mentions in the documentary (SSR documentary 2016) that this workshop was about sharing the skills and knowledge.

The guitar seemed to be the most challenging instrument in our workshop. As common for beginners, participants said it hurts fingers and couldn't practice very long time at first. Within the ten day's workshop we couldn't get very far with guitar since as a band instrument it is quite difficult to learn quickly if you start from beginning. Even though we stayed in very basic things, it seemed to feel good to be a band member who is playing with others and realizing the sound that comes out of the amplifier is coming from the guitar you're playing, giving motivation. As Green (2002: 86–88) describes, the guitar learning often craves strong motivation and a lot of practice. You don't get the feedback and feeling of succeeding as fast as for example from hitting the drum. Compared to Bayton's (1990: 242) study, joining a band often provides first experiences with amplifiers, causing "fear of feedback". The same thing happened with drums that were surprisingly loud for many of the participants playing them. There were some complaints about the drums from neighbourhood and as I described in my fieldnotes, the drums could be heard from distance, outside the café.

Learning to play the bass happened in a same way as learning guitar, as Holly was showing the grips and names of them. Playing bass was also hurting fingers a bit and we were also facing a specific problem. The instruments plugged in to amplifiers working with electricity were giving electric shocks to fingers. I experienced it too, as I was playing the bass for a while. Participant 3 had chosen the bass as Soon had asked her before the workshop, which instrument she would most preferably play. She had no experience before and seemed very happy as she got the first experiences of playing with an amplifier. Unfortunately, the electric shocks were at times challenging her motivation and that problem was not easy to solve. That caused Participant 3 being a little afraid every time she touched the strings.

Not many others could play the bass, even though guitar got quite popular, and many tried it. Like understandable and typical in fieldwork and participatory observation (Hirsjärvi, Remes, & Sajavaara 2004), I couldn't follow all the time how Holly taught the bass, because usually

at the same time I was giving instructions for other instruments. The bass occurred to be a bit problematic also because we had to borrow bass from local musicians, and it took almost the whole week to get a properly working bass. During first days we sometimes used the lower strings of guitar for demonstrating the bass lines. This might also help to start, because the strings are easier to press, but on the other hand it doesn't give the feeling of bass guitar very properly.

Although we thought we wouldn't get deeper into keyboard in our workshop, there were good chances and time to take it to the workshop program. Since it was easy to organize, I planned a keyboard teaching for Participant 4, who showed interest for it. There was a clear keyboard riff for song called 'Sra moyi keo' which we were playing, and Participant 4 was doing very well even though it was quite difficult to stay in rhythm with the melody. I marked the keys with stickers showing a tone name and 'coded' the riff on a paper. Participant 4 found the instruction easy to follow and with the help of a listening and copying technique (Green 2002) she knew how to play it in right rhythm. I was also teaching her chords which she was playing with keyboard in songs that we were practicing, and she could also join the chord changing exercises which we made.

### **2.3 Singing and writing a song with personal message**

To my knowledge, this was first time singing in a microphone for many of the participants, which Bayton (1990: 243–244) also defines very different from acoustic singing. Singer quest Lou Thy taught in a workshop some things about performing and how to sing in a relaxed way. She also took part to the practicing of the instruments and was part of building the team spirit. I would have known some singing exercises but didn't go into them deeper because I found them much more difficult to explain without common language, unlike other instruments, that are easier to show visually. It seemed in the workshop that singing was the most familiar thing for the participants and much easier to start spontaneously than any of the other instruments. They also found a brave way to sing and express themselves without instructions.

At KAMA knowledge of the Khmer rock songs was always available, and we chose to rehearse some of them. The covers we played had to be chosen so that they would be quite convenient for the instrument too, with knowing the basics of the instruments. The songs they wanted to sing were quite difficult, though. Many Khmer classics, like 'Sra moyi keo' and 'Rom rom rom', were rhythmically challenging and had fast changing chords for guitar

players, so they wouldn't have been our first choice for workshop songs. The participants learned very fast and were good at figuring out by listening how it goes and teaching each other.

We also tried to play some English songs, like "Wild thing" an original of The Troggs, covered by The Runaways, which Soon translated into Khmer. She also translated other songs from English to Khmer, which we didn't go so deep into, but what they liked. During the last days of SSR, the participants made their own song, which Soon made lyrics to, shown in my field notes (SSR Field notes 2016). The "Sou Sou" song was about, "We can do it, don't give up", a song about SSR. It can be seen on Youtube (Sou Sou 2016). In the documentary of SSR Soon describes how the song is about rehearsing the instruments and even though it's sometimes challenging, never giving up. Soon worked with participants with the lyrics and chords for their own song, and together they figured out how it would go as seen in Picture 2.



*Picture 2 Practicing singing Sou Sou song. Picture: Paula Mäkinen*

As Green also describes (2002: 130), singing can be seen as a band instrument and vocal teaching is part of instrumental education. In contrast to the quite common way of singing in a conventional and trained way, we want to provide a chance to find their own voice and make some noise by finding a punk style of singing, not in a way one “should” be singing (see Bayton 2003: 14 –17). There can be anarchy in not adapting to the normative performing style and using imagination. For the singer it is often important to find the rhythm with the band. This happened in a creative way in “Sou Sou” song. The song was put together with the help of Holly, as in the Picture 3 they can be seen arranging the song with Soon and one of the participants. The song starts with strumming the fast rhythm with guitar and bass, joined by the drums and lead singer, and the chorus is sung by all the singers, in a manner that doesn’t follow the rhythm strictly, but has the rebellious feeling in it.



*Picture 2 Arranging the Sou Sou song. Picture: Paula Mäkinen*

The role of a singer has been the most common thing for women in music. There are examples in history and today’s media that maybe make it easier for the participants to identify as a singer. The participants seemed to have many role models of female singers, whose songs they also wanted to sing in the workshop. Green (1997: 186) describes how to make a difference on lessons, not only providing girls the part of singer. By playing punk, we

could help them to find own, unique voice, not telling their roles from outside. For girl groups popular in 1960's, the music business, according to Warwick (2007: 65–68) provided some chances of rebellion, but also a very vulnerable position and ready-made roles (Warwick 2007: 62). Looking at the music scene of Cambodia and Southeast Asia it has been common in a same way (Saphan 2016) and often mainstream music still seems to provide women those roles. In SSR the aim was to oppose the most conventional roles and try something new.

## **2.4 Being part of a rock band**

The goal was to give the participants an experience of rehearsing some songs to understand the basic elements of rock or pop songs. After learning some basic chords and how to change from one chord another, the participants had a picture of how the chord structure can be formed in a song, and they already brought it to practice in their own creative processes. Especially with drums, as Green (2002: 29) explains, the patterns are often very similar in many songs and after learning a beat for a certain song, the same beat can be used for other songs, too. It is the same with chords in guitar and bass. Original songs bands which Green (2002: 50) mentions, can have a certain authentic attitude and message, even though the songs, despite being self-composed, can resemble some already existing songs.

We recorded the song, which had been one of our goals and filmed the recording situation, which later was material for a music video, and a documentary. This worked as what Marsh (2018: 98) describes being first step to motivation, in a Girls Rock camp context. A final show can be very empowering, as described in the articles, also according to my experience. The recording session was very emotional as everyone got to do something and they had fun with music, which is the most important thing in keeping the motivation for further practice, as also Green (2001: 104–107) points out in the context of popular musicians. Also, as for the participants of Rock Camp Regina (Marsh 2018), it was important to get an experience of doing something concrete.

The unarticulated goal in our workshop was to form a first band, or a practice band, which in Green's study (2001: 78–79) and according to my own experiences and empirical observation is usually where every musician starts, no matter what the outcome in later life is. Practice band is an important base for starting to learn and it was one of the goals in this workshop. Bayton (2003) also points out the importance of a practice band. As a community, it can be a very opening experience, yet not always easy. It's easier to start with like-minded people who are about same level with their skills.



The learning really started in the band, and the participants were often seen teaching others what they had learnt, pointing the right grips on a guitar neck, and negotiating about how to play the songs that they were rehearsing. The process of learning by starting from scratch is common in punk and rock. To build up a community of power and confidence, we were always also within the band playing instruments, also the ones we weren't most familiar with. The music producer quest Hama played drums on a track that we recorded where Holly also joined with the bass. In Picture 4 it is shown, how we the participants and instructors are playing in different roles, also in the recording situation.



*Picture 3 Participants and organizers preparing for the recording. Picture: Paula Mäkinen*

The music genre “rock” is used in our project partly to describe the music style that we were planning to play in Srey’s School of Rock, more specifically “Khmer rock” (see Mamula 2011). The term “rock” is often seen also referring to a broader culture and lifestyle (Frith 1978, Singer 2006, Dougher 2016) and music style in general. Käpylä (2018) made a notion that rock style is not currently so much in fashion for youth, and often not as attracting as rap for example. Considering the age of SSR participants, they might not be so keen on doing just rock. It is important to discuss about, how we highlight the genre, even though in this workshop the participants understood what the rock attitude means and enjoyed it. Despite the

name of the workshop, the purpose was not to insist on playing only rock or punk music. In Srey's School of Rock they had interest to play all kinds of music styles, but their own song was made in punk style. As it is understood, the rock or punk attitude as part of one's identity can also be applied to the goals of the workshop if the main goal can't be aiming to become a professional musician. This kind of band music, that was also played in SSR, is mostly connected to rock attitude, and it is commonly used for Girls Rock actions.

The Girls Rock initiatives, presented by Marsh (2018), Dougher (2016) and Singer (2006) use rock because of its spirit, including feeling of agency, being independent and having confidence. Simon Frith (1984: 372) has distinguished rock as more authentic, having different consumer's choice compared to popular music in general. This was familiar also for the participants of Girls Rock Regina (Dougher 2016: 195), also unfortunately including attitudes of who can play authentic rock. The original idea of rock has been the appreciation of amateurism in the style. This is especially seen in punk, which also provides more freely chosen roles for women (Lähteenmaa 1989, Leonard 2007). In our workshop the purpose is not to admire rock clichés but to draw inspiration from the freedom of rock culture and DIY principles (Bennett 2018).

Garage rock's, punk's spirit is something special since it allows and embraces mistakes and DIY-attitude for example. That was also heard in the song they made and video that was shot in DIY spirit (see Bennett 2018). In SSR, as Dougher (2016: 196) quotes participants of Girls Rock Regina, "being awesome" is possible in an environment where amateurism is embraced. In the context of rock camps (Marsh 2018), the young participants in USA didn't even want to become famous or consider music as a profession but they wanted to maintain the spirit of rock music. Instead of becoming a famous band, in this philosophy more important was the process of learning and trying out new roles. Even though singing might be the first way to express themselves, it is good to question the sexist conventions of authenticity and skills (Dougher 2016: 194). Especially in rock there often is the puritan attitude, for which garage rock, punk and DIY attitude have offered some opposing (Griffin 2012, Bennett & Guerra 2018).

## **2.5 Learning community in a gender specific safer space**

As we travelled from Bangkok to Phnom Penh and all the way to Kampot with Holly, we discussed about the experiences of playing in bands or jam nights in Europe, that are also common in Cambodia. Holly had also experienced the belittling attitude often when she had

been playing bass or some other instrument. As I before SSR and after it have worked in the Finnish context, I face the same kind of discussion all the time. Jungerstam (2019) made an interview with me, where I told her about similar experiences and why I want to work with gender specific music activities. As we also talked with her, it seems that whenever a woman is picking up an instrument or touches the mixer, there seems to be lack of trust in the person's skills. Pääkkölä, Käpylä & Peltola (2021) also describe the discrimination of women in music.

I didn't know about the participant's access to music and previous knowledge of it, but at least in this music café they might have gotten a common image, that playing is only for men. There would be a need for demystifying the music making, because it seemed that especially women didn't try it easily. My fieldwork didn't answer directly why, but provided some possible reasons for that, combined with the readings about women in Cambodia. It is important to consider the cultural norms that touch women's behaviour and the worldwide issues with music and gender (Björck 2012). According to the documentary, one participant "never had a chance to learn how to play drums or guitar", (SSR documentary 2016) saying: "I never thought I would be here, doing this today".

The participants talked about how they want to be role models to others, when I interviewed Hama and one of the participants and this was also said in the interview made for Cambodia Daily. The magazine ceased to exist shortly after the workshop and the interview unfortunately couldn't be published. They said in the interview, that they want to show women can do it, which includes an attitude that their skills must be proven, because playing is uncommon for women. It seemed to be very clear for the participants too, that there is a need to prove yourself more as a woman, indicated in lyrics they made. We all shared the experience that our skills are not trusted like they could be (see Jungerstam 2019, Pääkkölä, Käpylä & Peltola 2021) and to compare with our workshop, for example Marsh (2018) presents what kind of chances to learn there are provided in the feminist and gender specific community and what difference it can make.

Many researchers (Green 2002, Bayton 2003, Björck 2012, Käpylä 2018) present the problem of starting as a reason for the lack of female performers. That's what makes it difficult to proceed as a musician. In Jungerstam's (2019) interview I describe how I have not always had an encouraging learning environment, and it has affected my learning for sure. Also, Anna-Elena Pääkkölä says in interview about FemFest, that we gave for Turun Sanomat (Pakarinen

2019) that providing a good start and even a venue to perform can be crucial for women and non-binary people. In SSR we had as our agenda to provide the very start for music making, and we found out that it this community was useful especially for women, since there is a chance to learn the basic skills without being judged, in a safer space where one doesn't have to know everything instantly.

Jungerstam (2019: 12–13) has gathered the ideas of Safer Space, that I also have used as I worked in FunNet project as a music instructor, where we are applying the Safer Space principles. The principles include avoiding conflicts, prejudice, or intimidating talk. As aiming to follow the principles, a completely safe space can never be fully offered to everyone. Onkamo & Puttonen (2021) also describe Safer Space principles as respectful behaviour, not assuming anyone's background or identity, and giving space for everyone. These are often more and more explicitly followed in events and places. Safer space is one of the most important ways to remove some obstacles for starting. When given a chance to practice, the participants can be empowered to learn, not excluded from something that would be only for certain people.

In the group, one of them seemed to take a leader's role, which can be useful in making a band work, but in these circumstances, it was a bit challenging for us because the person instructed others in Khmer, and we couldn't always follow what was said. In a spirit of workshop and safer space, we still considered it important to claim our roles as instructors and reminded the person not to give enough space for others. By applying safer space principles, we can build sensitivity and empathy towards each other, taking responsibility in case of own mistakes, too. We as organizers should consider and fix our behaviour all the time. Especially in this kind of activity it must be made sure that the participation is equal, being also sensitive for the interpersonal relations. We had the responsibility to maintain safer space with our skills and instruct everyone to not take too much space (see Onkamo & Puttonen 2021).

There are lots of interventions and evidence how a supporting community that is considering also gender specific issues, can make learning easier, according to what Björck (2012) has written and my own experience before. Creating safer space for learning can sometimes mean separatist activities, in our case gender specific. Jungerstam (2019) writes that it would be good if we wouldn't need gender separatism, falling into a category that would marginalize women, drawing attention to the difference. In the workshop the meaning is to highlight participants' gender only by the means of support, that is needed because of the structures of

the society. The ideal situation would be that mixed gender bands would exist equally, so we could all make music together. Lähteenmaa (1989: 50) predicted that the need for women specific actions would have been vanished by this century, but according to my experience, there still seems to be the need.

We managed to make the space for learning in social way quite well, but the place was challenging. During the workshop we faced a few situations where outsiders got curious of what we were doing. There were lots of tourists, but also local family members who were interested to try out the instruments. There was discussion about whether welcome outsiders. In this kind of open space, it happened easily that many people were wanting to join, as visiting the café. We let some female tourists try out the instruments, and some men, too. It was difficult to keep the space as women's arena, so the café was not the most ideal place. Now too the workshop was clearly and separately women's thing, but on the other hand men that showed interest are good too, working as beginners. Bayton (2003) states, that women often start playing from a scratch in a band. KAMA as a venue offered an insight for the participants, where they have seen many men playing and demystifying the learning process can be encouraging. Men's skills often are taken for granted, but everyone has been a beginner once, as Bayton (2003) states.

As a tourist I have also bumped into other places, where only women are allowed in, as in the nearby spa in Kampot there was a women-only space. Excluding men from this workshop was sometimes justified, to create a safer space. Of course, any kind of exclusion can be questioned, but in Cambodia especially it is important to consider a women-only space in case there would be some problematic gendered power structures.

Having a video to show, also helps to get further with the workshop, as it can inspire future participants to join this kind of workshop. It is very important that it looks fun, and the empowering feeling comes through the video. It can be easier to start dreaming about something when there is a concrete idea of it and imagining something already means it exists on some level. They made the lyrics of "Sou Sou" song to encourage each other, but also to encourage their audience to learn new skills. When there's a good self-belief, that one can do it, it already makes a difference in their attitude, and they can show others too, what is possible, trying different roles through activism (Griffin 2012, Bennett & Guerra 2019). The principle "what you can't see, you can't be" that Holly mentions in the documentary (SSR

documentary 2016), affects the perception of the gender identity and what is possible within it.

The crew consisting of people who show that their background, social status, and what they are, doesn't decide if they can do something or not. Drawing from Dougher (2016), in this way it is important to have all women or non-binary crew. We as instructors wanted to represent different identities in live situations, such as some casual jam sessions in the evening time, where we wanted to show the participants how to act in a confident way. In my field notes there is a video that one participant shot, where I'm playing with Julien and Jason. Also, as shown in my field notes, Participant 1 joined a recording on drums as Lou Thy was singing "Rom rom rom" and already did very well. The participants of SSR act as role models and the message was already spread to the friends of the participants in the neighbourhood, and there clearly was interest for future workshops.

### **3 Reflections on the feminist workshop in Cambodia**

In this chapter I describe and analyse how the idea of the feminist workshop was perceived in that specific place and look at ways of empowerment, trying to find out, what cultural aspects there were involved, as we were working in this certain location. I also look at women's situation in Cambodia, where the building of an activist community is happening, considering the music as profession or hobby and ponder around the country's development, where the participants can be active in reinventing older Khmer music culture, and be empowered activists. I combine the data from the remarks made in the fieldwork with some readings, to get the realistic evaluation for the future activity. Finally, I present my ideas drawn from the research material, how to improve the future activity.

#### **3.1 Feminist activism in Cambodia**

In this chapter I describe how the feminist music activism was taken in Cambodian context according to the things I have learned about Cambodian women. Before the workshop my knowledge of their lifestyle was based on some readings and discursive study that I made earlier on the life of Kak Chanthy, the singer of Cambodian Space Project (Mäkinen 2016). I encountered the lives of women in Cambodia with some interviews I made in the field and by reading the supportive texts. I don't know for sure if issues that I cover, were present in the participant's lives, because without common language with many of them we couldn't have very deep discussions about these.

Maintaining family relations and responsibilities, housework and other work in private sphere are often on women's shoulders and they are not given the power in households, even though they would earn most of the family's money (Derks 2008, Fulu 2015). Still, women are bound to unpaid housework, also having to obey the order to not talk about private issues to outsiders (Jacobsen 2008), for example about husband's violent behaviour. The life of young women life is often more restricted than that of young men, including code of conduct and responsibility of maintaining high "moral". Saphan (2016: 5) describes that despite *chab srei* poems "were never official laws, they are still taught in schools, where children recite them by heart." I can't tell how much these assumptions were present in the informants' lives, as we only saw them acting in our workshop and free time in this same group of people.

As I was watching them playing and singing from the top of their hearts "Sou Sou", it meant that we already made a grassroots difference and succeeded in activism. They were playing as

a band, what they maybe couldn't have thought they would ever do, and were speaking up their minds. They were really rocking out with joy, as in the recording can be heard. For women role that differs from the code of conduct, might collide with the requirements they are facing. Loud rock music itself and the assumptions of the culture around it, combined with western style feminism can be quite radical, rock life seen as being against family life. In Cambodia, it can be brave to instead of chab srei poems (see Saphan 2016) have "Sou Sou" song's lyrics.

The purpose is not only to raise awareness about the problems, but already be the change and it was there already when they formed the band. The lyrics that they make were also activist and they also seemed to be shameless performers, making lots of jokes and being quite the opposite for the stereotype of a woman who doesn't make a sound (see Jacobsen 2008, Saphan 2016.). In the café they were joking, dancing and spontaneously singing, and they invited us to teach with smiles and excitement. I sensed that we had the feeling of having something in common, which was seen in the spirit of playing, and singing with joy after only short learning process of those skills.

We had the big interest to teach, but I couldn't tell for sure if they had the same interest for playing music and being in a band, and what would these mean to them. The motivation should be strong enough for committing to it and music making becoming part of their identity (Bayton 2003: 97–100, Green 2002: 114–117) to concur the different obstacles in their personal lives for making music (see Bayton 2003: 27–47) and organize time for that with school, work, family, and other use of the café environment. We didn't ask the participants about their previous experiences or obstacles in music making, but we knew that they weren't easily attending music sessions at KAMA. Some situations were difficult to intervene into, for example as one of the participants had to quit because of family demanding so.

The assumed roles of women and many problems that they are facing, differ partly from the struggles of Western women (Jacobsen 2008, Roces 2010). Even though a woman's life in Cambodia differs from Western women's life in many ways that are common and shared by Cambodians, the informants in SSR are a great example that even a small group of people living in a same area, categorized as women weren't a homogenous group in their class background, religion, age, sexuality or even gender. Cambodian conceptions of gender can't be applied straight to the ways they are seen in Western feminism (UNPD, USAID 2014).



Intersectionality is a term that emerged before 1990's through black feminist's critique on feminism that doesn't recognize multiple differences affecting same people, and how colour of one's skin, gender and social class can affect individual's role in the society. Crenshaw (1989) and Butler (1990) name the intersectional differences according to the individual qualities that intersect and affect the person's life and assumed roles in society. It is important to recognize these differences, and that there is not only one attribute.

In the Cambodian context having examples of someone relatable playing and making music can be good for self-esteem and inspiration. As women role models can be already much more relatable than men who have been playing at KAMA, there can be intersectional differences that make it more difficult to relate to me and Holly, for example. It is important that the documentary of SSR is now including material where different musician identities are represented.

There's a difficult question of transnational feminism (Rupp 1997, Sandell 2015) and goals in life, that outside music can differ between the people participating the project of SSR, which can lead to different ways of feeling empowered by this workshop (see Edwards & Roces 2000, Pearson 2011). As organizers we had different position when just visiting the place, but for the participants there are much more questions of social identity, on individual and communal level. For example, in Cambodian context it can be threatening that women get empowered, as indicated in one study, where the word "power" included in empowerment was sometimes seen as problematic (Doneys, Doane & Norm 2019). We also need to acknowledge the power relations inside SSR, not imposing our values or ideologies to anyone who is not wanting it and being aware of the possible consequences for them. Improving women's status in music making, seemed relevant to the participants, but we would need a better plan how to nurture the talent and empowerment also after leaving.

In Cambodia western women's behaviour can be disliked sometimes (Jacobsen 2008) and as guests we wanted to respect that. Kallio and Partti (2013), had also thought about the Western style of clothing and how it can affect the attitudes towards visitors. In this kind of project, it is important to respect the culture, bringing some new ideas, but being humble, ready to acknowledge the stereotypes they have of us, and vice versa. There is balancing between following the oppressing norms hidden behind "respectful behaviour" or ignoring their cultural code of conduct. Nevertheless, learning to rock can provide an empowering

experience. By playing the instruments in a band we are also opposing the masculine clichés and the stereotypes that tell how certain kind of people should act and look.

### **3.2 Being a woman and rock musician**

My study indicated some differences in conception and living the music culture, at least between this specific place and my home environment. In Cambodia people didn't seem to have hobbies or leisure time activities because of the different, entrepreneurial kind of rhythm of life, where work and leisure time are not so strictly separated, and I noticed that it was difficult to make the participants engage to only practicing music and really taking time for that. They had different family and work responsibilities and little or no leisure time at all, which is common especially for many women in Cambodia (Derks 2008, UNIFEM, WB, ADB, UNDP & DFID/UK 2004, Jacobsen 2008). This is what I also heard them say afterwards, as Holly, who visited the place after the workshop, told me in messenger discussion (SSR Online field notes 2019).

During the workshop maintaining motivation, committing to the band, and rehearsing in the long run would require organized scheduling, but the motivation of the participants for attending varied and we didn't try to affect that so strongly. Instead of a clear day-to-day plan we were always teaching and practicing in the meantime if there were no customers to be served at the café. Especially Participant 1 was very motivated, but sometimes the duties in café's kitchen took the time from practicing. It was obvious that their priority was the café work, but possibly the participants could maintain the regular practice by using their workplace for practicing on the free moments, considering they would find enough of those during their workdays. One participant believed in the effects of the practice, saying in the documentary: "If you like it, never give up, keep going" (SSR documentary 2016).

It is not easy to take 10 days completely free for any adult in Finland, where I previously have worked and even more difficult in Cambodia. Nevertheless, in Finland, according to my experiences with the model of an intense rock camp (Särö 2023) it has been successful with adults too. It seemed that for people in Cambodia, since young age the free time and working time are not so clearly divided. The participants did sing and listen to music all the time, as a participant said in the documentary "I listen to music a lot but haven't been playing the instruments" (SSR documentary 2016). Probably many of them have a dream to play music if they'd have a chance to access instruments and improve their skills. There was different kind of potential in a communal way of living that made it possible that women could work and be

part of our workshop, combining music making, work and leisure time. Women were helping each other out in different situations, babysitting if needed and they were having a helpful community around all the time. If this would work in the future, too, KAMA facilities can be very good for music making, despite the disruptions.

In Cambodian context it and might be difficult to motivate people to play “only for a hobby” because of the difficult history and ongoing poverty, which bonds people to the economically most effective work (Fulu 2015). Sam (1994: 39) mentions the strong attitude “country must be first before art can grow”, even though art and culture can play a vital part in rebuilding the country (PierSath 1993, Saphan 2017, Grant 2017). Usually, the economic outcome is what matters when people choose what to do with their time, as also Julien told me in 2015 (Mäkinen 2016). The study of economic concerns of traditional musicians of Cambodia also showed this (Grant 2017).

In our workshop they spent time together and shared their sense of humour with us. The playing provided refreshment and was maybe a different way of doing something together. This is indicated in the documentary, where one participant describes that “the instructors were more organized, not joking much”. We were also described to be professionals who are not joking around, meaning maybe that we tried to do it in more serious way than what the participants had assumed. Hobbies can be relaxing, but also stressful if income is coming from other work, so if the music activity becomes more ambitious, some income should come from it too, or then it should be kept as a hobby. Achieving certain goals in music might not resonate so well and more important than an organized schedule, would be to create a community where you can express yourself, and have fun.

According to Green (2002: 10) and Bayton (1990), there are different ways of being a musician, including professional and semi-professional musicianship, that usually are about doing a lot of covers of already known songs and the standard repertoire of songs. The possibilities to proceed as a band economically in Cambodian music scene are to become professional or semi-professional cover band (see Green 2002: 28–32, Shepherd, Horn & Laing 2005) that can get money from gigs or become famous with originals band. The ways of playing in a band can vary very much; some bands just play originals; some don't even want to play gigs. Green mentions also music business and fame, which are attached to some, usually originals playing bands (Green 2002: 11, 50–53). There are few chances to enter the Cambodian or international mainstream music industry which would make the bands make a

living with own music and gigs, so achieving that can't be among our first goals, but of course it never is impossible.

Having gigs not that frequently or not at all, not to mention getting money from it is often not a problem when trying to maintain enthusiasm for playing, according to my own experiences as a member of multiple bands in Finland and as a mentor in Girls Rock! Finland workshops in Finland. It is not difficult to make people have music as a hobby and gathering regularly to rehearse with a band to maintain the skills and simply have fun. This is unfortunately also bound to the differences in global south and Western world, and how much leisure time it's possible to have. Among the profession of traditional, classical musician, in Cambodia too, there has also been profession of musician playing different popular music styles (Shepherd Horn & Laing 2005) since the times of French colony, but in today's music culture bands playing the artist's original pop or rock music is very commonly a hobby, like the girls attending the Girls Rock camp (Dougher 2016: 202) for example saw it. The chances to earn all living as a musician are quite rare (Knuuttila 1998, Green 2002) anywhere in the world, so it would be useful to see, that there could be other empowering aspects even though it wouldn't provide straight income.

In today's music scene it is complicated to draw the line between amateurs or professionals, (Green 1997, Lähteenmaa 1997, Finnegan 2007, Jungerstam 2019), but the economic side is also interesting and important, meaning how female musicians can proceed in their career and earn money. I approached SSR originally by seeing music as a hobby and thinking about amateur musicians, even though it would be helpful and more developed to focus on the professional career, too. Being a musician requires a lot of commitment (Bayton 2003: 97). In SSR it is important to point out, what would be the chances to make own music and still make a living.

Women's opportunities to work more broadly in music industry (Bayton 2003, Bradley 1999) have historically been restricted. Jungerstam (2019: 25) has recently made a notion of women being left invisible in public spaces and there are still competitive manners and economic difficulties among women to get paid as professional and getting to play in the most famous and well earning bands. Jungerstam (2019) talks about the pay, small circles and how seriously women are taken as musicians, especially professionals. Nowadays there's a better chance for women to step out in social media and YouTube-channels for example, in these

times where all the venues are in a big change anyway. In Instagram for instance, there are many female musicians that might otherwise be quite unknown.

Considering studies, and how in Cambodian context (Jacobsen 2008) it is pointed out, being out late in the evening can lead to a bad reputation for women and girls. Koivisto has come to think that rock is often meaning a lifestyle and the reality of rock musician is often difficult working times (Koivisto 2004, Bradley 1999: 100). In rock culture there can be even stronger stigma due to the sexualization of female performers. Especially in Cambodia there might be even more appropriation rules, (see Awan 1996) and social stigma in different jobs, or just feminism (Jacobsen 2010), but also the sexual features connected to rock music (Frith 1978). Also, women musicians that Milka Uusitalo (2018: 58–62) had interviewed, pondered around having a family and playing in a rock band.

It's not only an issue of Cambodia that women are restricted more than average men. All over the world there are kind of same expectations of women's behaviour and women are facing same kinds of restrictions, how for example Cohen (1997) describes women in Liverpool, who were assumed to have devotion to home, as keepers of private space, and family, not actively being part of public space, that also Bradley (1999: 100) mentions as very typical attitude in post-war 1950's Britain. It's locally but also internationally typical, that women can't neglect responsibilities so easily to take time for their own interests. According to what I read and observed, internationally women seem to be excluded due to their assumed roles in society and there are practical reasons that restrict women more, as society's norms regarding gender may even forbid music making directly in some cultures (Koskoff 2014: 129). It can also happen, as certain responsibilities cumulate to women.

### **3.3 How SSR and KAMA can benefit Cambodian cultural life**

Importance of culture revival in Cambodia for the locals is not easy to point out, but today's scene that I've become familiar with, including the work of Cambodian Space Project's members, nowadays Julien Poulson's CSP Mothership, are creating international art and music scene between tourists, expats, and Cambodians, that creates an open atmosphere in a country which during 1970's Khmer rouge era was excluded from the world. That is also a space for multicultural and globalized citizenships, still bound to certain nationality (Aapola, Gonick & Harris 2005: 179–180), that are very common nowadays anywhere in the world, also for urban Cambodian women (Derks 2008).

As I have familiarized myself with the certain place in Cambodia, Kampot, and read articles about Cambodian context, I've seen that women there have been active in re-building the cultural field. According to what I have seen, they have been working especially as singers, dancers and in other old art forms, such as woodcut painting. There are also social media personas that I have followed, many women who do visible and public work are role models not only for Cambodian women, but all Cambodians or anyone who gets inspired by them. These persons, Dj Nana Tips, writer Thavry Thon and YouTube-activist Catherine Harry (Gardner 2020) are talking about reproductive rights, violence against women and there is a music group, Messenger Band, talking about discrimination in textile industry (see Messenger Band 2017).

As indicated in UN agenda 2030 (UN 2018), empowering women is good for the community. SSR activities are supporting women in learning how to speak for themselves, gain more self-confidence and better self-esteem, being actively part of the wider change in society. In Cambodia it is important to give voices to women and let them act equally as the reinventors of old culture, taking an active role and affecting community. In that way the social problems that are affecting women in many ways, can be diminished.

In Derks' study (2008) the young Cambodians aimed to build a better life. As Derks (2008: 1-3) points out, Cambodia is often seen in a negative light because of its history but by creating new projects and writing about Cambodia in a positive way it can become different. As Yuval-Davis (1997: 46–47), describes, nurturing a nation can provide different ready-made roles for women, that often include victimization or glorified role as nation's mother figure. As feminist values are often opposed to nationalist values (Edwards & Roces 2000, Jacobsen 2010), in Cambodia it's not only a simple question, how to rebuild the local culture with feminist activism. In Cambodia the nationalist movements have had their own agendas about women's roles, often not the priority to promote their rights, but to diminish the roles to housewives and glorify the gender roles prior to Khmer rouge period 1975–1979 (Jacobsen 2010: 2015).

The education given is mostly traditional, and there is a cultural crisis due to the loss of so many artists in the genocide, noted by the government, too (Nguonly 2004, Sam 2008, Kallio & Westerlund 2015, Grant 2017). The music style that we were playing in SSR, is not having a big role in music education at schools in Cambodia. There are some NGO-driven music schools, Cambodian Living Arts internationally best known (Grant 2017: 7), often focusing

on the traditional music, even though Western instruments would be used. When SSR participants were playing the old Khmer classics and making an original punk song in Khmer, they and we as guests wanted to respect and reinvent the culture. In Srey's School of Rock, the Cambodian music that participants play and create has an important role as contribution to continuation of a distinctive culture. Also, the popular music that has been reinvented in 2010's, can be seen as an activist act, rebuilding the nation's cultural identity by reinventing the art, in today's light of course and in Cambodia playing covers might have deeper meanings (see Mamula 2011).

This was also as the starting point, that brought enthusiasm to look at the older Khmer rock songs in the workshop. As my background, in Finland music teaching is focused on current international pop and rock, as also Kallio & Partti (2013) have written. Playing band music is also very common in Finnish schools, which can teach students democratic practises (Mansnerus 2006), applying the learning methods that Green (2002) has presented. Cambodian music education is focused on the traditional music (Sam 2008, Grant 2017) and traditional instruments, sometimes using also Western instruments, that have been common already since 1960's (Shepherd, Horn & Laing 2005). It is difficult to say, how much the old music means for the young people, which for example Sam (1994) and Mamula (2011) note. Resonating with my own thoughts of mainstream music, Mamula (2011: 30) also states that Cambodian contemporary music doesn't differ from mainstream music everywhere in any other way than the language used in the songs.

To cover the value of cultural activities and the statement "the country must be first before the art can grow" (Sam 1994: 39), I want to quote a Thesis of Chath Piersath (1993). He has been researching Cambodian cultural life's rebuilding and the trauma in diasporic context, where building of strong Khmer culture can be seen as a coping method, to recover from trauma. A program director interviewed by Piersath said:

"...I work with children by using artistic and cultural expression as a process of healing and to end the cycle of arms conflicts. I support and encourage their resiliency, and using arts to rebuild and regain their strong identity as Khmer. I believe that the development of strong identity is a strategy for coping because it connects the children back to their roots and traditions. Art and culture give identity. Dance is a healing quality in itself. Artists are the healers of the community" (Program Director of TPO in Piersath 1993, 69-70)

According to a quite recent study (Fancourt & Finn 2019), there can also be connections to physical and mental wellbeing, as one participates in art activities. UNESCO (2022) has also

listed the value of culture and art globally and pointed out the importance of free and diverse cultural expression and how different art projects can be implemented in Agenda 2030 goals.

### **3.4 The development and evaluation of the project**

In this chapter I am providing suggestions for making the possible future activity better, according to reflection on theoretical background in the spirit of Girls Rock camps feminism, and popular music learning styles. I'm presenting the main points that raised from the pilot action and analysing the pros and cons of it, so that this analyse would really help as an action research (Heikkinen 2010: 177) and pattern of simultaneously doing, analysing and improving the social activity in circulating process. The methods that I have used and the action itself, thus the theories and thinking connected to it have been part of the learning process. See Heikkinen 2010: 172). I could have used the community (Heikkinen 2010: 179-180) more in developing the workshop but this became my individual thinking process.

The idea of a practice band (Bayton 2003) and how Green (2002) describes how learning can happen in a band, we could elaborate the goal of rehearsals more. There would have been a goal-oriented concept (Attachment 2), often used at Girls Rock -camps that I've been part of, but it didn't start working here. The idea would be teaching systematically a bit of every instrument for everyone on the first day or first two days and then they would pick one instrument on which they'd be concentrating for the rest of the workshop and in that way the learning results even within a short time can be surprisingly good (Singer 2006). The advantage of it would be the more effective learning process and proceeding more with the instruments. Now the knowledge started to accumulate little by little and if it would seem impossible to have an itinerary to follow, SSR can also in the future act as a pop-up style workshop where the goals wouldn't be so clearly articulated, but feeling of empowerment and fun would still exist.

It has also been studied, how rock musicians learn and what a band can teach, concerning, what is important in learning to rock. A band can also teach crucial life skills, such as leadership skills, presented by organizers of SSR in the original plan (SSR Field notes 2016) and cooperation skills. Westerlund (2006) points out garage rock culture's potential in teaching music, following Green's suggestions for peer-directed learning. Green also lists things that are crucial (2002) in peer directed learning, that could really work in the future workshops, too. As soon as participants already know something about every instrument, they can join the sharing of knowledge and skills, as the participant of SSR described the style of



me and Holly as teachers (SSR documentary 2016). Mansnerus (2006) also suggests the democratic band as a model for pedagogy in music teaching. Both Mansnerus (2006) and Westerlund (2006) state that being very big part of Finnish school system. I also learned that way, and my Finnish background can offer some further benefit in implementing the pedagogic ideas on future workshops.

Based on the analysis of how we tried to teach the basics of the instruments, in the future it is important to pay attention on how we let them get familiar with the instruments with enough of sensitivity. By implementing the teaching techniques of critical pedagogy (Freire 1970) more, the workshop could be organized so that the participants can act as teachers more effectively, as in peer-directed learning style (Green 2002). Reflecting myself as an instructor, since the times of the SSR pilot workshop, I have gone through a process of learning a lot more sensitivity, learning from the working experience and different guides that have been published during that time (Kauppinen, Salminen & Haarala 2018, Onkamo & Puttonen 2021) and with that knowledge I am more prepared to use the Safer Space concept (see Jungerstam 2019), that is used more and more in different places and activities.

The workshop's idea was to provide safer space for everyone who would for social reasons be excluded, not given a chance to try and to express themselves (see Kauppinen, Salminen & Haarala 2018) no matter what the economic success will be, as Bennett (2018) has also described as an important value of DIY culture. Onkamo & Puttonen (2021) describe this as reaching one's own potential and experience of being empowered. Empowerment can have many benefits, such as speaking for your rights and having more confidence. Not everyone does have to become a professional musician to make a difference. The music workshop can be useful in other ways, too, showing how one can learn something they didn't know was even possible to learn and be empowered with this experience.

This study was focusing mostly on the development of SSR as an action research, not focusing so much on economic or social development in wider scale. The psychological aspect of personal development is considered, but it could be useful to turn this more towards an economic empowerment project, it seemed. Soon was doing the work in economically empowering way, showing how to start a business and get skills for that. Srey's School of Rock could have wider impact in the future if we can concentrate and cultivate the project in that way including ideas about sustainable tourism and the potential of it by means of a

culture exchange remembering UN Agenda 2030 (UN 2018), so that it would be easier to invest their time in this.

In SSR we really created team spirit despite some unclarities in planning and scheduling. Soon has a big interest to offer experiences, and I also got to join trips to nearby villages, beach, clubs, markets, and restaurants, additionally learning some words in Khmer. This could be utilized more with the international organizing team by offering inside information of how to find ecological products for example and how one could really support the community with sustainable tourism (Carter, Thok, O'Rourke & Pearce 2015). Tourism is the main business of many countries that go through rapid economic growth, as Cambodia (Globalis 2023). By building even more relaxed and communal style of sharing skills and offering something practical, like food, accommodation and business ideas, the workshop could be planned according to Cambodian lifestyle, fitted with the work, family, and childcare, providing possible career paths. The motivation for locals can also be international contacts, which can be very important in a tourism driven economy.

In the project there is needed an interpreter, to make it more inclusive, and really a safer space, where there would be someone to talk to about everyday problems. In this workshop Soon was already that kind of a person for the participants, and it was easy to build on her actions in this friendly environment, but we would have gotten even closer with the participants if having a chance to discuss more. That would also be needed for the organizers to be more aware of the group dynamics for example. By providing mentoring also in Khmer, the workshop could be more inclusive, reaching more locals and everyone would have the equal chance to be heard and understood. In the future it would be good to make sure that there is someone to talk to, following the examples of Gender café project (Sovann 2014) or the community for women in Phnom Penh (Ward & Mouly 2013). It would also be useful to ask and discuss about the possible difficulties and challenges that the participants are facing in their everyday lives, to have a chance to raise awareness of these issues more broadly, which was included in the original plans of the workshop.

This workshop could also be developed into online activity, since we already were there raising the spirit and empowering the local musicians, now they really could take over and start organizing the workshop on their own, maybe with international guests providing online lessons, that have become more common. Considering the ecologically harmful travelling by flying, it would be a good option. On the other hand, having a real-life contact is in many

ways important in understanding each other better, and keeping the contact, since online activities never have the interaction in a same way. It should be pondered around, what is the benefit in relation to damage.

Not all of the participants were unambiguously women, and it is important to ask, which pronoun they want to use referring to themselves can they be themselves in this group, without identifying as women. This time there were still too many assumptions, calling the workshop participants by “srey” and she, and there was an idea of shared womanhood, even though it’s not said that everyone would feel comfortable in that category. I’m talking about women in my work too, following the way it was considered in this workshop. The Cambodian ways of talking about gender and sexuality (UNPD, USAID 2014) differ from how I for example have learned to grasp the concepts. In Cambodian context it should be considered, what kind of terminology would be inclusive for all LGBTIQ+ people there. As pointed out, I want to include all non cis-men to these principles. The awareness of gender diversity is better in all Girls Rock movements nowadays and a common gendered experience is not so much highlighted. During the time I have worked with Girls Rock! Finland, nowadays named as Särö Musiikki, the global music activities starting from the movement in USA have developed towards more inclusive for different identities.

Our workshop was having a feminist agenda and we wanted to openly contribute to women’s rights, but just being women and doing something in a group doesn’t automatically mean a feminist agenda. We should elaborate on those goals for music, feminism, and empowerment for future activity and formulate the aims and possible problems that can affect reaching the goals. For strategic essentialism it is important to have these kinds of activities, as “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (Spivak 1996: 214). Since categories still exist, we need to use them strategically, and momentarily ignore the differenced within the group.

It would be good to follow the empowerment of the participants more systemically after the workshop, using some evaluation methods for empowerment (see Fetterman, Kafterstam & Wandersman 1996). It would be interesting to study further, how they felt about the workshop afterwards, and how they could keep the music in their life, checking with them through online meetings for example. Pearson’s (2011) findings showed, how empowerment can be perceived in a different way from what the researcher has meant. In SSR, the interest to make music was connecting us, even though there would be varying obstacles for it,

depending on our different backgrounds. It also should be confirmed that their real motivation to participate is coming from own interest. As planned before, we could raise awareness of issues in Cambodia and inequalities in the music field globally and make impact with the workshop, mutually on Cambodians and international guests being an audience for their voices.

## 4 Conclusions

The focus in this study was to contribute the future of SSR from the observations that were conducted in the workshop that took place in Kampot, Cambodia, with Julien Poulson and Kek Soon as key informants. This workshop was conducted by us on a self-financed and volunteer basis as a pilot version, where we could offer participants instruction with musical instruments, but no accommodation, food or transport that were planned. Often the challenge in starting music is the availability of instruments, so the facilities and equipment of KAMA were crucial in that way.

The ways we found for teaching the instruments and band activities to participants were a bit different from planned, as the workshop schedule was more up to the participants and shaped around their free time. Our roles in the workshop were partly pre-planned, but also shaped by our skills quite spontaneously. Kek Soon had a big role in the workshop as translator, organizer and peer teacher. Other organizing team members helped with the equipment, documenting and recording and filming the workshop.

We worked through the planned responsibilities, teaching how to play drums, bass, guitar, and keyboards with the learning styles of popular music players as described by Green (2002). Collaborative learning emerged as a big theme and was used in many ways, including blurring the boundaries between teachers and students. We also wanted to act as role models for learning in the interlude of community-based teaching, and the participants themselves expressed their desire to act in turn as inspiration and encouragement for others.

The role of singing in the workshop took the form of playing older Khmer rock music, but above all, finding a unique rock singing style by performing their own lyrics and by translating some English songs into Khmer. The role of the singer is very common for women musicians and often involves conservative assumptions, but in the workshop, we wanted to take it in the direction of free expression, away from the norms.

Recording was an important end to the workshop, as in previous Girls Rock activities, it brings together what has been learned and creates a goal to achieve something concrete. The role of the rehearsal band, as Bayton (2003) also describes, is important when starting to play, so that the principles of band playing become familiar and one can also learn operating patterns and arranging styles. Bringing rock music style as an integral part of the workshop, not by repeating rock clichés but by taking confidence from it with one's own style.

In the workshop, we saw it important to think about the principles of safe space, which as a woman in the music world in general are very poorly implemented. A safe learning environment with room for trial and error is important and we had to reflect on the space at KAMA, which was crowded with outsiders, which meant that we could not keep the space reserved for our target group only. In Cambodia there are many such spaces and given the often-vulnerable position and roles of women in this environment, it might be even more important to provide a women-only space than in the home environment.

The cultural aspects, as working in this certain location, should be considered. Feminist activism in Cambodia seems to contain specific issues, which I explored through supportive literature. Women also seem to find it more difficult to engage in recreational activities, due to assumptions about them and stricter codes of conduct. In the Cambodian context, it would be important to earn an income from playing music, if it is even slightly more serious and goal oriented. On the other hand, there is a potential environment for music making in a community atmosphere and if it were to become part of informal communal fun, band activities could well start to develop. In Cambodia, the revival of music culture and cultural life can also be seen as important and justified because of the recent history.

What can be learned from the workshop as a pilot version, and drawing from some theories, my Finnish background in the school system and music education can be a benefit for this kind of a project. Also, we could apply more of the life skills and peer directed learning, that already were present in the workshop. There would be benefits in cultivating this towards a more economically driven empowerment project, but to keep in mind the value of recreational activities as such. The tourism connected to this kind of workshop more strongly would bring mutual benefits for participants and for instructors, probably international. The interpreter would be needed, to make this even more empowering, and it should be also considered to make this partly or completely an online activity, to diminish the negative effects of flying. Also, it would be important to follow the results of empowerment and support participants as empowered agents. We should pay attention to the use of gender and be more sensitive to different gender identities. Still, following strategic essentialism, it can be relevant to have a feminist workshop aiming to improve women's and other non-cis males' chances in the music making.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Summary in Finnish

#### Työn tavoite ja lähtökohdat

Tutkielmassani käsittelen kambodzhalaisille naisille suunnattua Srey's School of Rock -musiikkityöpajaa (SSR), jonka järjestin joulukuussa 2016 yhteistyössä Julien Poulsonin KAMA:n (Kampot Arts & Music Association) kanssa DIY-hengessä. Päädyin Kambodzhaan tekemään tutkimusta ja järjestämään työpajan tutkittuani ensin kandidaatintutkielmassani Cambodian Space Project -yhtyettä ja sen laulajan Kak Chanthyn toimijuutta. Naisena ja muusikkona pidän tärkeänä edistää musiikkimaailmassa sukupuolten tasa-arvoa, mikä ei kenttätöön aikaan eikä edelleenkään toteudu kovinkaan hyvin.

Näistä lähtökohdista Julien Poulsonin kanssa syntyi ajatus järjestää 10 päivän pituinen musiikkityöpaja. Ohjaajiksi tulimme minä ja Holly Lewis, joka oli aiemmin soittanut Cambodian Space Project -yhtyeessä bassoa kiertueilla ja studiossa. Työpaja toteutettiin KAMA:n tiloissa, jossa oli vuodesta 2014 lähtien ollut taidetoimintaa, mutta naisia oli ollut hankala saada osallistumaan. Naiset ovat harvinaisempi näky instrumenttien soittajina kansainvälisesti ja Kambodzhassa heidän rooleihinsa voivat vaikuttaa jollain tavoin vielä erilaiset käyttäytymiskoodit, joita tutkielmassani tarkastelin Kambodzhalaisten naisten elämää käsittelevän kirjallisuuden ja erilaisten voimaantumistutkimusten kautta.

Koska haluan kohdistaa tutkimukseni mahdollisimman tarkasti musiikkityöpajan toimintaan ja sen kehittämiseen, tutkimuskysymyksinä ovat:

1. Mitä tapoja löysimme työpajassa soitinten ja bänditoiminnan opettamiseen?
2. Millaisia kulttuurisia seikkoja työpajaan liittyi sen toteutuessa tässä tietyssä paikassa?

#### Aineisto ja metodit, teoreettinen viitekehys

Teoreettinen viitekehys liittyy sukupuolen ja musiikin kysymyksiin, joita on usein tarkasteltu naisten kautta, kuitenkin koskien myös muita marginalisoituja ryhmiä. Vaikka tutkimuksessani en paljoa voi syventyä syihin, miksi naisia on musiikin soittajissa niin paljon vähemmän, on sitä kuitenkin tutkittu paljon. Tutkimus tuo myös esiin alalla toimivia ja

toimineita naisia, kuten esimerkiksi 1960-luvulta alkaen vaikuttanut indonesialainen Dara Puspita. SSR-työpajaan liittyvässä punkissa naiset ovat myös vaikuttaneet pidemmän aikaa. Soittimia soittavia naisia on syrjitty, mihin vastauksena on syntynyt riot grrrl -liike ja sen myötä Girls Rock-leirit, joita järjestettiin alun perin USA:ssa, tarkoituksena luoda ympäristö, jossa muusikoita ei tuomita heidän ominaisuuksiensa, kuten sukupuolen takia.

Kambodzhan historia ja sen kytkökset populaarimusiikkiin on myös tärkeä kiinnostuksen kohteeni tutkimusmielessä. Olen tutustunut Kambodzhan kulttuuriin ja historiaan Cambodian Space Project -yhtyeen sekä John Pirozzin ohjaaman *Don't Think I've Forgotten* -dokumentin kautta. Kambodzhan musiikkikulttuurin uudelleenlämmitys on herättänyt 2000-luvulta alkaen kiinnostusta länsimaissa, ja khmer rock -musiikkityyli tullut myös itselleni tutuksi. Kambodzhan kontekstissa musiikin merkitys kulttuurin uudelleenrakentamisessa on tärkeää ja historian perusteella populaarimusiikin soittaminen merkityksellistä paikallisen kulttuurin kannalta.

SSR liittyy myös voimaantumiseen, mikä on paljon käytetty termi erilaisissa, erityisesti naisille suunnatuissa projekteissa. Valottaakseni erityisesti paikallisten naisten elämää ja heidän haasteitaan, käytän apuna joitain voimaantumistutkimuksia, sekä kirjallisuutta, jossa kuvataan Kambodhalaisten naisten elämää. Erilaisten kulttuurien feminismien kysymykset ovat tärkeässä roolissa ja haluan ottaa tutkimuksessa huomioon erilaiset intersektionaaliset identiteetit.

Aineiston keruun menetelmänä on etnografinen kenttätyö, johon kuului tärkeimpänä osallistuva havainnointi oltuani itse aktiivisesti mukana toiminnassa, jota samalla tarkkailin. Vaikka tutkin myös itselle vieraalla kulttuurialueella tapahtuvaa toimintaa, olen kuitenkin toiminnan sisäpiiriin kuuluva tarkkailija. Tutkielman kohde on Srey's School of Rock -musiikkityöpaja, joka toteutui 1.-10.12.2016 Kampotissa, Kambodzhan eteläosassa, KAMA:n (Kampot Arts & Music Association) tiloissa. Olin itse alusta asti järjestämässä ja toteuttamassa työpajaa, jota tutkin ja minun on otettava huomioon erilaiset roolini tutkijana ja organisoijana. Koska kyseessä on toimintatutkimus, kiinnitän myös huomiota muistiinpanoihini työpajan suunnitteluvaiheesta sekä ajalta kenttätyön jälkeen.

Aineistooni kuuluu kenttäpäiväkirja, järjestäjien kesken käytyjä keskusteluja, suunnitelmia ja muistiinpanoja ennen työpajaa. Työpajasta on kenttäpäiväkirjan lisäksi kuvia ja videoita, joita

sekä minä että osallistujat kuvasimme, sekä kirjoittamiani muistiinpanoja joistain avoimista haastatteluista, joita toteutin kentällä. Aineistossani työpajaa valottamassa toimii Youtubessa julkaistut Julien Poulsonin tekemä lyhyt dokumentti, joka sisältää videomateriaalia ja osallistujien kommentteja työpajasta sekä tallenne työpajassa tehdystä kappaleesta ”Sou Sou”. Aineisto on tallennettuna arkistoihini.

Aineistonani toimii myös keskustelut työpajan jälkeen, sisältäen suunnitelmia tulevista työpajoista. Minulla on jatkuvasti yhteys Kambodzhaan ja siellä toimiviin yhteistyökumppaneihin sosiaalisen median kautta ja työpajalle on ollut suunnitteilla jatkoa. Tutkiessani kenttätystä kerättyä materiaalia, jossa vaikuttavat myös omat muistoni ja muistikuvani, on otettava huomioon, kuinka itse kenttätystä kulunut aika ja tulevaisuuden tavoitteet vaikuttavat tulkintoihini aineistosta.

Tutkielmani on laadulliseksi tutkimukseksi luokiteltava ja etnografisen kenttätysten menetelmin toteutettu toimintatutkimus, joka voi hyödyttää Srey’s School of Rock -työpajan tulevaisuuden toiminnan kehittämisessä. Kirjoitin tutkielman englanniksi, jotta se on paremmin hyödynnettävissä toimintatutkimuksen muodossa. Eettiset seikat otan huomioon seuraamalla kriittisen globaalikasvatuksen periaatteita ja sitä, miten esitän tutkimuskohteeni. Osallistujilta varmistettiin myös heidän halukkuutensa osallistua työpajaan, joka toimi tutkimuskohteenä, ja vaikka he ilmaisivat suostumuksensa esiintyä kuvissa ja omalla nimellään, pidän heidät anonyymeinä omassa tutkimuksessani varmistaakseni, ettei näille henkilöille koituisi tutkimuksestani haittaa. Eettisessä pohdinnassa omaa rooliani ajatellen minua auttaa länsimaalaislähtöiseen kolmannen maailman feminismin kohdistettu kritiikki.

### **Keskeiset tulokset**

Tutkimuksen toteutumisen mahdollistivat avaininformantit Julien Poulson ja Kek Soon. Olimme puhuneet rahoituksesta ja apurahoista, mutta tämä työpaja toteutettiin meidän osaltamme omakustanteisesti ja vapaaehtoisvoimin pilottiversiona, jossa tarjosimme opetuksen ja hyvät soittimet. Usein musiikin aloittamisessa haasteena on välineiden saatavuus ja KAMA-musiikkikahvilan tilat, joissa työpaja toteutettiin, olivat erittäin toimivat tältä osin. Työpajan aikataulu muovautui osallistujien vapaa-ajan mukaan. He työskentelivät kahvilassa, jossa Soonilla oli tavoitteena opettaa työelämätaitoja ja luoda turvallinen yhteisö nuorille naisille. Soonille muotoutui iso rooli työpajassa tulkkina, järjestäjänä ja kitaran

vertaisohjaajana. Mukana olivat myös Jason Shaw ja Gillian Docherty, sekä Julien Poulson auttamassa laitteiden kanssa, dokumentoimassa ja äänittämässä sekä kuvaamassa työpajaa. Myös minun ja Hollyn roolit työpajassa muotoutuivat oman osaamisemme mukaan rumpujen ja basson, mutta myös kitaransoiton sekä yleiseen bändisoiton ohjaajiksi. Hollylla oli taustaa sosiaalityössä ja itselläni Suomessa järjestettyjen Girls Rock! Finland -yhdistyksen (nykyään Särö Musiikki) leirien soitin- ja bändiohjaajana. Soittotilanteisiin ja äänitykseen otimme kaikki osaa spontaanisti oman osaamisemme mukaan.

Kävimme tilan ja ajan puitteissa soittimia läpi hyödyntäen erilaisia populaarimusiikin soittajille tyypillisiä oppimistyyliä. Myös feministisen pedagogiikan periaatteet ovat sovellettavissa tekemisiimme. Kävimme osallistujien kanssa läpi suunnitellusti rumpuja, bassoa, kitaraa, sekä koskettimia Lucy Greenin (2002) kuvailemilla populaarimusiikin soittajien oppimistyyliillä. Yhteisöllinen oppiminen nousi isoksi teemaksi ja sitä hyödynnettiin monin tavoin, myös opettajien ja oppilaiden rajaa hämärtämällä. Halusimme toimia yhteisöllisen opetustyylin lomassa myös esikuvina asioiden opettelusta ja myös osallistujat itse ilmaisivat halunsa toimia puolestaan innoituksena ja kannustuksena muille.

Laulun rooli työpajassa muotoutui khmer rock -musiikin opetteluksi, mutta ennen kaikkea keskityimme omanlaisen rock-laulutavan löytämiseen omia sanoituksia esittämällä ja myös joitain englanninkielisiä kappaleita khmerin kielelle kääntämällä. Laulajan rooli on hyvin yleinen naisille sisältäen usein ulkoapäin saneltuja rooleja, mutta työpajassa halusimme viedä sitä vapaamman ilmaisun suuntaan, irti normeista.

Äänitys ja kuvaus oli tärkeä lopetus työpajalle ja kuten aiemmassakin Girls Rock -leiritoiminnassa on todettu, se kokoaa opitun ja luo tavoitteeksi saada aikaan jotain konkreettista. Harjoitusbändin rooli, kuten Mavis Bayton (2003) kuvailee, on tärkeä soittamista aloittaessa, jotta bändisoiton periaatteet tulevat tutuiksi ja myös bändille sopivia toimintamalleja sekä sovitustyyliä pääsee opettelemaan. Musiikkityyleiksi valikoituivat khmer rock ja punk. Rock-musiikkityylin tuominen olennaiseksi osaksi työpajaa oli perusteltua lähinnä rockiin liitetyn asenteen kautta, ei maskuliinisia rock-kliseitä toistamalla vaan omaksumalla itsevarmuutta.

Työpajassa tärkeää oli huomioida turvallisemman tilan periaatteet, jotka musiikkimaailmassa yleisesti toteutuvat hyvin heikosti naisten kohdatessa syrjintää, kuten kollegani Hollyn kanssa

totesimme. Turvallinen oppimisympäristö, jossa on tilaa virheille ja uudelleen yrittämiselle, on ensiarvoisen tärkeä ja pohdittavaksi jäi KAMA:n ulkopuolisillekin avoimet tilat, joita emme pystyneet pitämään vain kohderyhmällemme, eli muille kuin cis-miehille varattuna. Kambodzhassa sukupuolisensitiivisiä tiloja on paljon ja naisten usein haavoittuvaisen aseman ja roolien takia tässä ympäristössä se saattaisi olla vielä tärkeämpää kuin kotikentällä.

Feministinen aktivismi Kambodzhassa näyttäisi sisältävän erityisiä kysymyksiä, joita tarkastelin hieman voimaantumista käsittelevien artikkelien kautta. Naisten vaikutti näissä olosuhteissa olevan hankalaa sitoutua instrumenttien soittamiseen ja bänditoimintaan. Musiikista täytyisi saada tuloja tai sillä pitäisi olla muitakin merkityksiä, jotta sille saisi järjestettyä tarpeeksi aikaa ja sitoutumista. Musiikkitoiminnalla ja myös populaarimusiikin soittamisella voi nähdä olevan Kambodzhassa kulttuurisesti erityisen tärkeä rooli.

Tiivistetysti voi todeta, että huolimatta Kambodzhassa vastaan tulleista haasteista työpajan järjestämisessä, onnistuimme luomaan toimivan oppimisympäristön, jossa oli mahdollista opetella bändisoittoa yhteisöllisesti. Turvallisemman tilan suhteen paikassa oli vielä parannettavaa, koska se oli jatkuvasti avoinna ulkopuolisille. Haasteet bänditoiminnan jatkuvuuteen vaikuttivat liittyvän erityisesti ajankäyttöön ja taloudellisiin tavoitteisiin, sekä naisten oletettuihin rooleihin. Kambodzhassa kulttuurielämän kannalta työpajalla on tärkeä rooli, vaikka länsimaalaisvaikutteisen populaarimusiikin soittamista voisi myös kritisoida.

Toimintatutkimuksen hengessä löydösten perusteella kehitysehdotuksina esitän, että vertaisoppimista ja myös bändissä opittavia sosiaalisia taitoja voisi korostaa vieläkin enemmän, jotta voimaantuminen soittajana tapahtuisi vielä vahvemmin. Turvallisemmassa tilassa olisi myös tärkeää saada tehdä virheitä ja oppia niistä ja tämän toteutuminen tulisi taata kaikille osallistujille. Tulkki tämänkaltaisessa projektissa olisi tärkeä, sillä ohjaajina olisi tärkeää olla selvillä myös mitä osallistujille kuuluu ja puhua tuntemuksista työpajaan liittyen ja mahdollisesti muistakin ongelmista. Kielen tulisi olla inklusiivisempaa, ottaen huomioon erilaiset identiteetit, eikä vain naiset, mutta toisaalta strateginen essentialismi, jossa jätetään väliaikaisesti ryhmän sisäiset erot huomioimatta, voi auttaa saavuttamaan paremmin kohderyhmän ja luomaan yhteisiä tavoitteita. Tuomalla työpajaan myös musiikin ulkopuolella tapahtuvaa kulttuurivaihtoa, voisimme saada aikaan vielä enemmän taloudellista hyötyä, toisaalta muistaen taiteen tekemisen ja luovan toiminnan itseisarvo.

## Appendix 2 Srey's School of Rock Itinerary

### Monday /Day 1

12.00-15.00 Arrival to KAMA, tea/coffee/ juice/snack, getting familiar with each other, the place, chatting

15.00-17.00 Start, introducing ourselves, the project/camp, similar camps, what have we done in Finland/internationally etc. presenting KAMA, something about culture in Cambodia

-names, relation to music and instruments, favourite bands, own other interests, wishes concerning the School of Rock, etc.

-some ice-breaker games

17.00-18.00 Dinner, free chatting, KAMA's restaurant, or Banteay Srey?

18.00 ->finding accommodation, travel to Banteay Srey or other place near, information about next day

### Tuesday /Day 2

9.00 Breakfast and travelling to KAMA

10.00 Introducing today's programme, getting started, two or three groups, introducing the song that will be rehearsed today

10.00-16.00 Instrument round, trying out guitar, bass, drums, playing the cover song  
(lunch break between at 13.00)

16.00 Relaxing and chatting about the round, picking the instruments

17.00-18.00 Dinner

18-19.30-> Movie about Cambodian music/Girls and Rock??

20 -> Accommodation

### Wednesday /Day 3

9.00 Breakfast and getting to KAMA

10.00 Today's programme, choosing the bands, forming the groups, wishes, thoughts

10.30-11.30 Singing-workshop for all, relaxing, breathing, using own voice

(Meanwhile the mentors make the decisions of bands, who plays what and the line-ups)

11.30 Introducing the bands, every band has meeting on their own, with one mentor? Three bands?

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Starting to jam the song that has been learned yesterday, one by one in the band room, other bands are in workshops meanwhile 1. naming their band 2. Talking about girls and rock, attitude, thoughts

16.00 Chilling out, something fun, games etc.

17.00-18.00 Dinner -> Accommodation

#### **Thursday /Day 4**

9.00 Breakfast, getting to KAMA

10.00 Today's programme, thoughts about previous days etc, revealing the names of the groups

10.30 Lecture about song writing, lyrics, music, chords, melody etc.

11.30-13.00 Three bands, three different actions, circulating 1. Jamming the cover song or starting to jam a new own song, with all instruments 2. Lyrics-workshop 3. Acoustic song writing with guitar, mentors help

13.00 Lunch

14.00-17.00 One hour /band workshops 1. Go on with the own song -composing with instruments, with the whole band, 2. Acoustic song writing, outside, quieter place 3. Watching videos of bands performing, getting a grip how a band works

17.00-18.00 Workshop of keyboard and other additional instruments

18.00 Dinner -> Accommodation

#### **Friday /Day 5**

9.00 Breakfast and getting to KAMA

10.00 Today's programme, chatting about the song writing, mentoring if problems/questions

10.30-13 Three working spaces 1. Rehearsing /Composing song with band instruments 2. Making graphic art provided by KAMA, workshop of band poster 3. Acoustic band meeting, shaping the melodies, lyrics, chords, harmonies, keyboard etc.

13.00 Lunch

14.00-15.00 Lecture about basic rehearsal room / stage technology, plugs, mixing, microphone etc.

15.00-17.00 Three groups 1. Go on with rehearsal 2. Go on with the graphics/ band poster workshop, advertisements for the upcoming gig? 3. Go on with acoustic shaping/harmonies, melody, additional instruments

17.00-18.00 Dinner

18-> Disco at KAMA, relaxing, games, some free time programme

**Saturday /Day 6**

9.00 Wake up / Breakfast

10.00 -> Refreshing Day Trip to the Monkey Island

20.00 Back to Kampot

**Sunday /Day 7**

10.00-12.00 Easy Morning, long Breakfast

12.00 Getting to KAMA, information about the recording, checking how ready the bands are with their songs, if they faced some problems etc. 1 song /band

12.30-14.00 Practise in groups, 1. about 45 min/band with the instruments, 2. Acoustic rehearsal 3. getting familiar with the studio work

14.00 Lunch

15.00-18.00 starting recording with the band that is most ready with their song, getting first the base for the song ready, drums, bass, guitar(s), raw demos (other groups 1. Rehearsal, 2. Promo pictures)

18.00 Dinner

19.00 -> Movie, "Rise of a Pop Diva" / "Don't Think I've forgotten" or something else?

20.30 good night!

**Monday /Day 8**

9.00 Brekfast, getting to KAMA

10.00-13.00 Short introduction for the studio day 2, starting recording with the next band (meanwhile 1. Rehearsal 2. Promo pictures (1,5 hours / action)

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-17.00 Other set: 1. the last band in the studio, basics ready 2. Rehearsal 3. Promo pictures

17.00-18.00 Dinner

18.00 something relaxing/useful, workshop about the relaxing etc. -> Accommodation

**Tuesday /Day 9**

9.00 Breakfast and packing, Getting to KAMA

11.00-13.00 Short information about the day, starting the last rehearsals 30min/band (meanwhile other bands are doing workshop with posters, dresses, crafts, listening to their records etc.)

13.00 Lunch

14.00-16.00 Checking that everything is packed, preparing ourselves to leave



16.00 Travel to Phnom Penh, posters, advertisements of the gig

18.00 ->Accommodation

### **Wednesday /Day 10**

9.00-12.00 Breakfast and finding our way to the venue in Phnom Penh

12.00-13.00 Brief discussion about feelings on the last day and before the gig

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-16.00 Last rehearsals, soundcheck

16.00-18.00 Getting ready, warm-up!

18.00 Showtime, SREY'S SCHOOL OF ROCK GIG in Phnom Penh (which place??)

(After the gig gathering, sharing feelings, something about the future, saying goodbye, PARTY!)