

“No TERFs On Our TURF:” Building Alliances Through Fractions on Social Media in İstanbul

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Abstract:

I draw on public articulations of trans subjectivities in contemporary Turkey, İstanbul, in order to identify key points of contestations between myriad gender and sexuality-related activisms, notably the cis-feminism/trans-feminism dichotomy. I question the claim of “western import” upheld by transphobic and trans-exclusionary discourses in Turkey. I argue that questions related to trans inclusivity and/or transphobia in contemporary Turkey are reflective of unresolved tensions between LGBTI+ activists and cis-feminists that can be traced back to as early as the 1990s. By doing so, I hope to provide a better understanding of the continuity of the debate rather than its presumed contemporary emergence. Ultimately, the aim of my analysis is to provide recommendations while focusing on building alliances through the many fractions involved between trans, queer, and feminist activisms in İstanbul, Turkey.

Let's assume I used testosterone – my beard started to grow, my voice became low pitched, my body got more muscular – and I started to be assigned as a cis man. I wonder, would this change my experience as a performer of compulsory femininity? Did that experience disappear into thin air from my body or mind all of a sudden? I prefer to be in places where I don't push myself into, where I can open up more space. Some trans men define themselves as pro-feminist. I think people should exist wherever, and however way they feel like expressing themselves.¹ (Arıkan 2011)²

Over the past two years,³ a group of Turkish cis feminist academics took to social media to discuss Hormone Replacement Therapy's (HRT) age restriction in Turkey, in parallel to and in agreement with similar discussions taking place in the UK.⁴ A few claimed that children/youth who decide to take hormone blockers might regret their decision later in life ("desistance"⁵), which might contribute towards cases of dysphoria. In Turkey, HRTs are regulated by the state and constitute an important stage in the transitioning process for trans-identifying individuals. In addition to the topic of HRTs, these academics pointed out the "male privilege of trans women" on their Facebook and Twitter accounts, again referring to various UK-based sources⁶ in the process.

Following these well-publicized discussions on "desistance" and "male privilege," LGBTI+⁷ collectives and NGOs soon responded that "trans women are women" and that "transphobia will not be tolerated by queer-feminist activists."⁸ They challenged the question of "male privilege" by emphasizing "cis privilege"⁹

¹ *Testosteron kullandığımı –sakalım çıktı, sesim kalınlaştı, bedenim kaslandı- ve dışarıda erkek olarak algılandığımı varsayalım. O güne kadar yaşamak zorunda bırakıldığım kadınlık deneyimi benim zihnimden ve belki de bedenimden kayıp mı oldu? Uçtu mu? Ben açabildiğim –ama kendimi dayatmadığım- alanlarda yer almayı tercih ediyorum, önemsiyorum. Bazı Trans erkekler de kendilerini sadece pro-feminist olarak tanımlıyor. Bence önemli olan kim, nerde, nasıl kendini ifade edebiliyor, kendine uygun görüyorsa ve iyi hissediyorsa o şekilde ve o yerde var olmalıdır, olabilmelidir.*

² Ali Gül Arıkan was a prominent trans feminist activist who died because of ovary cancer in 2013. He took part in documentary productions and wrote articles in *Amargi*, aiming for the visibility of trans subjects.

³ I finished drafting this paper in April 2020; thus, I did not include the ongoing conflicts and debates that took place virtually on 22-28 June during the İstanbul LGBT Pride Week. In the election period of Genetically Mutated Tomato Awards, on the 24th of June, some cis feminist academics had been nominated because of their transphobic statements in Twitter debates between September 2018-August 2019, some of which I revisit. These nominations did not lead them to get the Award since J.K. Rowling overthrew them with her recent announcements about trans bodies.

⁴ UK Gender Recognition Act in September 2018: <https://time.com/5891598/gender-recognition-act-reform-uk/>

⁵ This has been mentioned repetitively by these cis-feminists as "the literature on desistance," which means "regretting one's transition process" or "detransitioning."

⁶ Some of these cis-academics translated and disseminated UK-based sources in a blog named *Translation from the World* [Dünyadan Çeviri].

⁷ I prefer to use acronyms "LGBTI+" to include trans, non-binary, queer, asexual individuals, in alliance with *SPoD* which is an LGBTI+ NGO in İstanbul. I utilize the expression "queer activists" as a collective that encompasses LGBTI+ identities and their allies, including LGBTI+-inclusive cis-feminists.

⁸ <https://www.gazetepatika11.com/kaos-gl-trans-kadinlarin-cinsiyetlerini-sorgulamak-kadin-dusmanligidir-nefrettir-44011.html> [Accessed March 2019]

⁹ https://twitter.com/irismozalar/status/1159367291869499392?fbclid=IwAR3H1u12Li-Ck-srfMs1rw_n5cnMDqa_qsPe1EZghyLGPQrAWDG0hwwl1M [Accessed 8 November 2020]

instead, and prioritized “femicide” in their response, which also visibly impacts trans women in Turkey.¹ Throughout these social media debates cis-feminist academics and people who supported them were referred as “TERF”¹ (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) while cis-feminist academics defined themselves as GCFT (Gender Critical Feminist Theorist). I utilize the term TERF throughout this piece.

UK-based trans-excluding groups, such as *Get the L Out* and *Mayday4Women*, took advantage of the 2018 Pride in order to highlight the supposedly “threatening” character of transgenderism (Tudor 2019:2), and to claim that “the existence of lesbians and women is being erased by trans people.” In Turkey, some TERFs draw upon the UK context to argue that issues related to queerness or fluidity of genders and sexes are western “imports.”

Notwithstanding the transnational implications of trans debates, I draw on public articulations of trans subjectivities in contemporary Turkey in order to identify key points of contestations between myriad gender and sexuality-related activisms, notably the cis-feminism/trans-feminism dichotomy. I question the claim of “western import” upheld by transphobic and trans-exclusionary discourses in Turkey. I argue that questions related to trans inclusivity and/or transphobia in contemporary Turkey are reflective of unresolved tensions between LGBTI+ activists and cis-feminists that can be traced back to as early as the 1990s. By doing so, I hope to provide a better understanding of the continuity of the debate rather than its presumed contemporary emergence. Ultimately, the aim of my analysis is to provide recommendations focused at building alliances through the many fractions involved between trans, queer, and feminist activisms in İstanbul, Turkey.

A Brief Context for Convergences and Divergences among Cis and Queer Feminisms in Contemporary Turkey

After the 1980’s military coup, a feminist movement gradually took off in Turkey with an agenda on abortion rights, violence against women, equal participation in politics, and social life (Tekeli 1992; Sirman 1988). This movement adopted new terminologies, such as patriarchy and sexism, formed consciousness-raising groups, established its own publications, organized as a collective (non-hierarchical and independent), and established novel institutions, including women shelters, libraries, and women’s studies departments in universities.

Although consisting of several distinct groups, the movement consisted mainly of cis, hetero, urban, middle class, and highly educated women who were directly influenced by western feminist knowledges, a point of contestation that would lead to various criticisms over the years (Diner 1992; Tekeli 1992; Sirman 1988). Overall, the political views of these collectives oscillated between radical and socialist feminism, which led to the exclusion of arrays of women, and to contested attitudes regarding who counts

¹ LGBTI+ identities in Turkey do not benefit from specially-formulated legislations, such as legislations against hate crimes, equality in marriage and employment, anti-discriminatory laws, or legislations for HRTs or transition surgeries. Thus, these debates on HRTs do not reflect the urgencies in LGBTI+ activisms in Turkey.

¹ Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists are a group of radical feminists who do not include trans identities, especially trans women, into feminist activism because they consider that trans individuals did not experience patriarchy in the same way cis-feminists did.

as a woman (Kerestecioğlu 2016:4). Still, and despite tensions within the movement, it remained largely immune to state interferences.

As the military coup's effect wore out after 1980, radical feminists and trans-rights movements became increasingly active, and their work culminated in two important political moments aimed at drawing attention to the state's violence against women and trans women's bodies. The first was the *Campaign Against the Battering of Women* in 1987;¹ the second was *trans sex workers' hunger strikes in Gezi Park* in 1987¹ (Çetin 2015).³

Turkey's contemporary LGBTI+ movement gained visibility and momentum towards the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s and "bore leftist and anarchist characteristics and drew support from feminists, anarchists, and ecologists" alike (Birdal 2014:15). Similar to the feminist movement, the LGBTI+ movement in Turkey also emerged from urban, middle class, and university settings. Trans individuals became politically active in various organizations in *EHP LGBTT*¹ or *Lambdaistanbul*¹ around the same era. However, the largely gay/male-dominated LGBTI+ scene resulted in many trans and cis women feeling marginalized. This led trans women activists to prioritize trans advocacy in more recent years and establish the group *İstanbul LGBT(T)*.¹ Similarly, the *VolTrans TrānsMen Initiative* was established with similar self-organizational mottos. Lesbian and bisexual groups tended to organize together with feminist collectives, but this was not enough. What's more, with lesbian and bisexual orientations being largely overlooked in both political circles, a short-lived but effective collective *Lez-Bi-Fem'* (Lesbian Bisexual Feminists) saw the light between 2015 and 2017. Additional alliance work between LGBTI+ and cis women included the magazines *Amargi*,¹ which was published between 2006-2015 and *Feminist Politika* under *Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif* ie *SFK*¹ (Başaran 2011:22-23). Both outlets enabled discussions on LGBTI+ issues and transfeminism.

However, despite these identitarian differences, cis women and LGBTI+ activists did and continue to coincide on several fronts. Indeed, feminist and LGBTI+ activists often converge in relation to femicides, trans murders and/or suicides, domestic violence, harassment cases, and ongoing litigations on transitioning cases. Zengin (2016:270) contours "the framework of 'gender killings'" that "allows us to think more capaciously about our shared experience as killable cis women and Trans people." Thus, the violence both cis and trans women encounter in general does bring them together, albeit momentarily.

¹ <https://www.catlakzemin.com/17-mayis-1987-dayaga-karsi-dayanisma-yuruyusu/> [Accessed 7 November 2020]

¹ In 1990's, trans individuals,³ especially trans sex workers, experienced police brutality to a great extent by Beyoğlu-centre area's police force. This hunger strike took place to highlight the violence under custody, beatings etc. This event, in some sources, is perceived as the start of the LGBTI+ struggle in Turkey as Çetin (2015) suggested.

¹ A sub-organization of a leftist group

¹ An LGBTI+ NGO that has been active since 2006.

¹ İstanbul LGBT(T) was founded by trans women activists in 2007.

¹ A collective which focused on coming outs and lesbian and bisexual's sexuality, aimed for lesbian-bisexual visibility in activist circles. <https://www.facebook.com/lbfem>

¹ The feminist magazine *Amargi* was published between 2006-2015 and enabled discussions on LGBT issues and transfeminism thanks to trans activist allies who came out back in 2010s. This magazine became the focal space for the inclusion of trans subjectivities into the feminist movement.

¹ Socialist-Feminist Collective (SFK) was a feminist collective; they published a quarterly journal *Feminist Politika* between 2008 and 2015.

What's more, the larger conservative society tends to fuse both women and LGBTI+ advocacy initiatives. For example, in September 2019, Family Council [*Aile Meclisleri*], an organization opposing gender equality, went as far as to request that LGBTI+ NGOs be classified as "terrorist organizations" due to their dissemination of "indecent" and "homosexuality."²

In particular, the Gezi Park Protests in 2013 (Birdal 2014) and the 2016 coup attempt placed considerable pressure on civil society. Cis women and LGBTI+ activists both found themselves being targeted by the Turkish state that banned Pride Marches in several cities (including İstanbul) in 2015. A number of LGBTI+ themed events were either banned or raided by the police due to "public indecency," especially in Ankara. In 2019, the 8th of March Parade was banned due to "fears of terror attacks" and a number of feminist organizations were fined for organizing or attending feminist marches in Mersin² and İstanbul.²

Whereas my brief overview above can familiarize us to broad areas of agreements and disagreements between cis and queer feminist activists, I focus on the narratives of exclusion and inclusion aimed at trans women. The question of "who counts as a woman" marks a discrepancy between dominant trans-exclusive cis-feminists and queer trans-inclusive ones.

The Discussions on Feminism – 2011 Roundtable

In 2011, and during the 8 March parade commemorating International Women's Day, a self-identified trans participant was asked to "leave the parade" because "men are not allowed in this space" (Zengin 2016:266). This parade took place at a time when trans/queer feminists and cis-feminists had acute tensions regarding the visibility of trans individuals, evident in some banners that trans/queer activists held, such as "trans people exist."

Two roundtables organized by *Amargi* Magazine entitled *Discussions on Feminism [Feminizm Tartışmaları]* soon followed (Özdemir and Bayraktar 2011; 2012). These discussions centered the inclusion of trans women in the larger feminist movement by pondering venues for building a more inclusive way of doing feminist politics.

In the first roundtable, self-identifying trans Sema/Semih called out the harassment they experienced on the 8th of March. In their words:

² <https://ilkha.com/guncel/aile-meclisinden-bakan-soyluya-escinsel-orgutler-hakkinda-talep-104584> [Accessed 8 November 2020]

² <http://bianet.org/bianet/print/215449-kadin-cinayetlerini-onle-cagrisi-yapan-kadinlara-para-cezasi> [Accessed 8 November 2020]

² <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202003081041555982-istanbulda-8-mart-valilik-yasagina-ragmen-kadinlar-feminist-gece-yuruyusu-icin-toplaniyor/> [Accessed 8 November 2020]

We don't talk about hierarchies, harassment, or violence among us ... A lot of feminist activists lecture us about not being a woman or feminist enough, not giving up on male privilege² (Ahıska 2011:312)

The presumed permanency of trans women's male privilege is a pitfall many cis women often fall into. On this point, Emi Koyama's (2017) *Transfeminist Manifesto* highlights the bullying and ridicule that many trans women endure before their transition, and the "depression" that their male body causes them (2017:267). I strongly agree with Koyama. A male body does not necessarily equate to privilege. Male privilege itself is a rather uneven concept with hegemonic masculinities often dictating it at the expense of subordinate ones. What's more, Aligül's quotation at the beginning of my paper is telling of the dangers of thinking monolithically about gender performance and sexual orientations. Tudor (2017:4) argues that deterministic perceptions on gender restrict trans women's self-identification processes because "being a man [is] equated with being a sexual predator." The equation of masculinity with predatory behavior reinforces binary gender norms and blocks the possibilities of fighting against cis sexism.

On the other end of the debate, Filiz, a cis-feminist activist, criticized trans activists for "not partaking in year-round activities related to fighting violence against women, campaigning against rape litigations" and "only showing up on 8th of march parades"² (Karakuş and Akkaya 2011:82). She also confesses feeling tense on "trans alliance issues because they [cis-feminists] may be stamped 'transphobic' during their course of learning about trans subjecthood" (Ibid.).² In many cases, cis-feminists blame "political correctness" for limiting the scope of the wider debate.

In my view, accusations of "transphobia" should not be easily condensed into attempts to "silence or lynch people;" rather, it should be perceived as an early warning to reflect on one's arguments. Maybe to rephrase them or do more critical thinking on what is counts as transphobic (in the presence of trans individuals). It should be perceived as an active process of learning and unlearning. The way individuals/activists hesitate or avoid thinking about their transphobias might be perceived as their reflection of privilege, because simply they do not have to think about it. Filiz' sentence was and still is one of the most relevant arguments in the context of the TERF debate as well, since many trans activists have been accused of "lynching feminists for asking questions."

² Ben birazcık kadınlara açık³kamusal alanlardan bahsetmek istiyorum. Özellikle son 8 Mart yürüyüşünde ve öncesinde yaşadığım olaylardan dolayı kadınlara açık bu alanlarda feminist öznenin zaten şekillendiğini düşünüyorum. Ben kendimi Trans olarak tanımlıyorum. Kadın ya da erkekim demiyorum şu anda, çünkü dört-beş senedir kadınlık ve erkeklik deneyimini bir arada yaşıyorum. Ve sürekli her şekilde bir feminist olma mücadelesi veriyorum, çünkü yıllardır feminist hareketin içinde mücadele vermiş, feministleşmiş kadınlar bana feminist olmadığımı ya da nasıl feminist olmam gerektiğini öğretmeye kalkıyorlar sürekli.

² Biz feminist kolektif olarak kadın cinayetleri için kampanya yapıyoruz, tecavüz davalarını takip ediyoruz, tacize karşı yürüyüş yapıyoruz vs... Şimdi Transarkadaşlar istisnalar dışında bu mücadele alanlarının hiçbir yerinde yoklar ve birdenbire yürüyüşte "trans feministler vardır" diye ortaya çıkıyorlar. Bir sene boyunca süren eylemlilikler var ve bu bir sene boyunca feminist mücadele her yerde sürüyor, 8 Mart'a gelip "Trans feministler burada" demek yetmiyor.

² Trans arkadaşlar meselesinde ise biz SFK olarak da tartışıyoruz ve gerçekten öğrenmeye, anlamaya çalışıyoruz. Feminist hareketi kadınlara açık diye düşündüğümüz için, aslında trans erkek arkadaşların bu yürüyüşlerde destekçi olması gerektiğini düşünenlerimiz var, ben bunu 8 Mart toplantısında da söyledim. Ama bu konu hassas tartışmalara neden oluyor, hemen transfobik, homofobik olmakla itham edilebiliyorsunuz! Bu yüzden sen hem bunu söylerken zorlanıyorsun hem de karşıdaki sana "transfobik" dediğinde haliyle rahat tartışmıyorsun.

Correspondingly, in the recent debates, cis-feminists accused queer activists of “being uncommunicative or putting them down for no reason for simply asking questions.” Sara Ahmed perceives this attitude as a survival method, similar to one’s refusal to certain dialogues with perpetrators of violence. In her words: “A refusal to have some dialogues and some debates is thus a key tactic for survival” (Ahmed 2016:31). This strategy of survival and protection would sound familiar to many women who encounter any kind of harassment or violent attack.

Another feminist academic-activist, Nükhet (Ahıska et al. 2011:304), was more critical about the whole inclusion debate and stated that she is “afraid that feminism might become immobilized/stable if they keep shutting themselves down to [biological] difference.”² Similarly, Ahmed (2016:30) rightly argues that “‘biology’ has become weaponized in feminism.” Indeed, biology becomes a precondition for womanhood, which leads to the exclusion of trans individuals. The aspect of the biology question was particularly visible during the second roundtable in 2012.

The Discussions on Feminism – 2012 Roundtable

2012 saw the second roundtable of *Discussions on Feminism*. Queer activist Berfu reminded the attendants that “the exclusion of trans individuals based on their so-called ‘male energies’ or ‘not being women enough’ goes back as far as the 1990s when two leftist and Kurdish feminist trans women, who were in the process of transing still, were excluded because their identity was ‘not entirely knowable’” (Gülkan and Aligül 2012:258).²

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In a statement published in *Amargi*, trans man Aligül (2012:260) takes issue with the “compulsory femininity” expected from trans women and acutely argues that “the number of trans identities in the world would be as equal to the world’s human population.”² He highlights how trans individuals who have not started their transition processes (i.e. not passing) were questioned and restricted on the basis of their sex when participating in demonstrations on November 25² or March 8.

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² Benim korkum şu ki, feminizminimiz sabitleşiyor ve içten içe kendi kendimizi bir şekilde kemirmeye başladık! Ve bir şekilde de farklılıklara kendimizi kapatarak teorik olarak çürümeye başlıyoruz, diye düşünüyorum.

² Bu yaşananların Türkiye’deki deneyimle benzerliği ise şu: Ülker Sokak, Pürtelaş Sokak, Sormagir Sokak deneyimleri zamanında yaşananlar ya da Esmeray ve Demet gibi birçok trans kadının da feminist hareketin içinde var olmaya çalışırken yaşadıkları sorunlar da –ki bu sorunlar hâlâ var, görmezden gelinebiliyor. Mesela ben Esmeray’ın önceki konuşmalarından birini dinlerken birilerinin, ona “Senin erkek bir enerjin var,” demesine çok şaşırmıştım. Aslında bu yüzden translarla feministlerin karşılaşmalarında yaşanan sorunlar, birçok yerde benzer şekilde yaşanıyor. Tarihini Amerika’dan doğru anlatınca sanki burada böyle sorunlar yokmuş gibi algılanıyor ve “Orada bunlar yaşanmış olabilir ama bunlar bizi burada neden ilgilendiriyor ki?” sorusuyla çok karşılaşıyoruz. Transfeminizm’i biz Amerika’dan ithal etmiş gibi algılanıyor. Hâlbuki bence bu uzaklığın sebebi, buradaki birçok Trans bireyin açıldıktan sonra yaşadıkları deneyimlerinin feminist hareket içerisinde şaşkınlık ve şokla karşılanması ile bu deneyimin nasıl konuşulacağına bilinmemesidir.

² Bence dünyada ne kadar insan varsa o kadar çok sayıda da trans kimlik vardır. Cinsiyet çok içselleştirilmiş bir şey ve bütün yaşam bunun üzerinden gidiyor. 8 Mart ve 25 Kasım eylemlerine transların katılmasından dolayı, son iki senedir feminist hareket içerisinde yaşadığımız tartışmalar da aslında beden geçişi yapmamış insanların cinsiyetinin bir şekilde sorgulanıyor olmasıdır.

² International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Emi Koyama (2006:704) rightly states that cis privilege “like other privileges, is invisible to those who possess it.” Koyama unburdens trans women from the weight of male privilege by linking it to an “asset” when and if they “have the integrity and conscience to recognize and confront this and other privileges they may have received” (Ibid.). Privilege can originate from having certain cultural, social, or economic capital or having a certain skin color. Ahmed (2016:32) breaks down the issue of privilege by highlighting the action of “passing through.” Here, one must recognize that the labor or performance of being a woman is not evenly experienced. This is particularly true for most cis individuals because they do not have to think about these boundaries and are rarely questioned about the genuineness of their gender performance. Trans individuals are constantly questioned and policed in an array of spaces and by a range of bodies: by the state, in the hospitals or courtrooms, by queer or feminist allies. In that sense, if one self-identifies as a cis or trans woman, the claim of male privilege, or “male energy” in Turkish circles phrase, must be automatically dropped, since it denies these individuals’ very self-identification, which is transphobic to say the least.

In the gathering, some queer feminists challenge the idea of “transfeminism³ being imported from the US, as if this concept has no relevance or supporters here,” highlighting that exclusions are not new and experiences of trans individuals are being overlooked because of its shock value, which leads to not being able to talk about these issues³ (Gülkan and Aligül 2012:258).

Another important point raised during the second roundtable had to do with questions on intrusion and protection. Some queer feminists pointed out the body policing that cis women enforce. Trans activist Ulaş (2012:274) stated:

Cis-feminists insist on knowing others’ sex or genitalia because they fear so-called “male intruders.” I believe that we will only be able to talk about transfeminism once we resolve the issue of transphobia.³ (Gülkan and Aligül 2012:274)

³ The transfeminism that is repeatedly mentioned in these roundtables is meant to cover trans individuals and feminist allies’ (queer or cis) activist groups that prioritize coalitional politics between feminism and newly blooming trans movement.

³ Tarihini Amerika’dan doğru anlatınca sanki burada böyle sorunlar yokmuş gibi algılanıyor ve “Orada bunlar yaşanmış olabilir ama bunlar bizi burada neden ilgilendiriyor ki?” sorusuyla çok karşılaşıyoruz. Transfeminizm’i biz Amerika’dan ithal etmişiz gibi algılanıyor. Hâlbuki bence bu uzaklığın sebebi, buradaki birçok Trans bireyin açıldıktan sonra yaşadıkları deneyimlerinin feminist hareket içerisinde şaşkınlık ve şokla karşılanması ile bu deneyimin nasıl konuşulacağına bilinmemesidir.

³ “...kimliğinden emin olmak zorunda. Senin cinsiyetinden, cinsel organından, ne düşündüğünden, nasıl bir politika yaptığından emin olmak zorunda. Bir yerden sonra gelen erkekler “Biz de 8 Mart’a katılmak istiyoruz, biz de feministiz, siz bizi sorgulayamazsınız,” diyecekler diye korkuyorlar. Bence temel nokta şu: transfobiye çözdüğümüz zaman Transfeminizm’i de konuşabileceğiz.”

Likewise, trans activist İlksen highlighted how, by reappropriating “heterosexism and the idea of prudery,”³ cis-feminists exclude trans individuals³ (Gülkan and Aligül 2012:277). Reflecting on these parallel points might enable bringing queer and feminist movements together.

During this meeting, many queer/trans activists mentioned feeling resentful after the 8th of March incident in 2011, because for many years, they had considered themselves to be allies to the feminist movement. These two roundtables contained one of the first and most open-hearted discussions on transfeminism in contemporary Turkey. This process improved relations between queer activists and cis-feminists, but as it can be perceived from the recent flow of the events, it was not enough. Scholars such as Ahmed (2016) and Koyama (2006) rightly point out the many detours and obstacles that alliance work demand. Whereas both trans/queer feminists and cis-feminists converge on a number of experiences, my discussion above shows that solidarity in practice is not necessarily guaranteed. There are too many fractions, divisions, privileges, and hierarchies that activists should constantly reflect on. I have to point out that after these roundtables, the March 8 parades have become more and more inclusive in terms of queer and LGBTI+ individuals.

In terms of alliance building, I adopt Koyama’s ideal of transfeminism: “Transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels genuine, comfortable, and sincere to us as we live and relate to others within given social and cultural constraints” (2017:271). Transfeminism is about “taking back the right to define ourselves” from any kind of authority (Ibid.). In practice, this translates into a fight on multiple fronts: from the state that regulates the transitioning process and abortion, to institutionalized religions that instrumentalise cis women’s and queer bodies.

Social Media Discussions in 2018 and 2019

The 2011 and 2012 roundtables I focus on formed the tipping point of ongoing trans-exclusionary tendencies. Contemporary social media discussions were relatively more academic, at the same time, more accessible and visible through social media compared to activist focused gatherings in the 2010s. However, the non-resolution of the issues they focused on became particularly more polarized and polarizing because marches and physical gatherings in the events have been banned by the state since 2015.

Responses to cis-feminists’ arguments on HRTs and male privilege were various and came from an array of circles: trans/queer activists, trans feminists, academics, NGOs, etc. On the other end of the debate, TERFs quickly and largely deleted their posts from social media, making it thus difficult to keep a record of them. I utilize the ones I can have access to, hence some disconnections in-between. Still, many queer activists contributed to archiving, framing, and summarizing the arguments in the process. This process is ongoing at the time of writing.

³ ... aslında “Bedenimiz bizimdir”, “Kimsenin namusu olmayacağız” gibi ürettiği bütün söylemleri, Trans varoluşu içine almayarak reddediyor ve heteroseksizmi, namusçuluğu başka bir şekilde yeniden üretiyor.

³ Some queer activists would also bring the issue of class, in relation to feminist activism, claiming “it contains middle-class privilege that everybody’s responsible of and does not put any effort in unpacking it (Gülkan and Aligül 2012:287)” as it has also been highlighted in Sirman’s (1988) and Tekeli’s (1992) pieces.

In mid-September 2018, the blog *Translations from the World* transcribed and translated Michele Moore's (2018) speech³ on HRT's use in Britain in which she questions "whether there's social contagion mainly because children self-identify as transgender in friendship groups and in clusters" because there is a rising number of transgender children in almost in every school in UK.³ She continues mentioning the increase in numbers of trans-identified children³ and hormone usage.³ For all of these developments, Moore blames the process of "self-identification" applied by certain LGBTI+ organizations such as Mermaids, Gendered Intelligence, and Stonewall, and criticizes that parents are left outside of the decision making due to "child's confidentiality."³ This concept covered a relevant ground in the debates in Turkey as well. The same translation blog generally disseminated "gender critical" texts from Northern context. For instance, a translated piece from Liberation Collective from 2017, titled "Transfeminism: What does it have to do with Feminism?" (Işık 2017), claims that trans individuals should not be part of the feminist movement. Although the blog claims to open up a space for discussion on issues such as the inclusion of trans individuals in feminist circles, age limit on HRTs, and queer theory, much of its content is biased or considered to be conservative by queer activists.

The issue of HRTs was first raised in September 2018 by cis-feminists who are connected to academic circles, who proposed restricting HRTs to those of 18 years of age and below. They claimed that trans youth who start the transitioning processes at an early age might regret this later. Öznur questions whether "a child can decide for ultimately invasive hormonal treatments" since "the medicalization benefits pharmaceutical companies."⁴ What's more, she accused trans activists who criticized her, of censorship by stating "[...] critical thinking, human rights advocacy cannot be done by censoring scientific research."⁴

In response, a number of queer activists highlighted the positive effects of using HRTs at an early age and posited it as "a human right."⁴ Some pointed out the heteronormativity of "positive science" and its

³ <https://dunyadanceviri.wordpress.com/2018/10/13/britanyali-kadinlar-cinsiyetin-taninmasi-kanununda-yapilmasi-ongorulen-degisikligi-tartisiyor-michele-moore/>

³ "I think most people nowadays who have got teenage children know of a transgender child...there's one in every school and every class. But all of these for me poses really serious questions about whether there's any validity to transgender self-identification or whether there's social contagion mainly because children self-identify as transgender in friendship groups and in clusters. So that makes me think is there some social contagion factor..." (Moore 2018)

³ "A few years later since that book [Transgender Children and Young People: Born in Your Own Body] came out we've got a rise of 4500 percent in girls identifying as transgender over this decade" (Moore 2018).

³ "If the child publicly self-identifies as transgender then they rapidly find themselves on this medical pathway with very little possibility for getting off of it or for changing your mind. Because belief in self id renders any support you might offer as conversion therapy" (Moore 2018).

³ "I keep hearing stories of schools transitioning children without their parents' consent, so this, it turns out, is in line with guidance that organizations who are influencing schools, Stonewall, Mermaids, and Gendered Intelligence, are pushing in school where they are claiming that a child's confidentiality must remain uppermost and therefore parents need not be told if a child is self-identifying as transgender" (Moore 2018).

⁴ The quote is taken from a Facebook status that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request.

⁴ Ibid.

⁴ It is the absence of hormone therapy that would be invasive or even fatal for (trans) girls and boys. The annotation of 18+ leads to children abusing of hormones. The risk of being more invasive would be hormonal self-therapy with

prejudice towards trans individuals. The counter-arguments of TERF academics consist in using “scientific” sources to show that there is no monolithic defense of HRT⁴ and that precautions should be always be a priority when it comes to children’s transition processes.

A year later, another cis-feminist academic, Zeynep,⁴ took issue with “trans women’s male privilege.” After a couple of days of long online debates, Zeynep wrote a self-recrimination letter in her blog.⁴ In addition to highlighting her contribution to academia and recognizing the work of prominent trans activists in the past, Zeynep positioned herself as a “GCFT” (Gender Critical Feminist Theorist) whilst describing TERF ascriptions towards her as “libelous.” Zeynep also acknowledged the state-sanctioned challenges that trans individuals face and in what could be described as a message of solidarity, wrote: “Masculinity is in every one of us, and it may emerge in various kinds of relationships.”⁴ “Masculinity” may indeed be in every one of us, just as “femininity” is. To view masculinity or male bodies as inherently predatory is problematic, generic, and biologically deterministic, as Tudor (2017) has rightly argued. Additionally, these categorizations ignore anyone in between, for example, non-conforming individuals, transmasculine individuals who are not resilient to violence or become perpetrators of violence, or feminine boys who are similarly oppressed by the patriarchal system. On this note, Deniz, a queer online activist, responded to the male privilege of trans women argument: “to claim that being assigned as male is the reason for oppression rather than considering cis privilege as part of patriarchy, is plain cruel.”⁴

Another position I consider to be “gender critical” is that of Öznur, who, after being criticized for her trans-exclusionary narrative, wrote a statement on social media and in the newspaper *Duvar*, in which she argued that lynching harms both movements and possible alliances. She claimed that she was merely voicing some of the recent medical researches on desistance from Netherlands, also debated on BBC, with the aim of “bringing the worries of the ‘cautious’ parents and doctors.” She also added that she “didn’t know trans-activism had ‘banned’ desistance literature,” and that she will continue to “defend trans rights.”⁴ Gender-critical ways of doing politics question the deconstruction of biological sex and its binary categories by trans/queer politics. Öznur claims: “Why should we deny biological sex, deny evolution, erase ‘female’ to defend rights? That is the actual question. The activism that has dragged the case here is responsible for this situation. This will hurt trans people and females first.”⁴ Deniz would respond in another post: “it is one thing to affirm women’s bodies because they are being a/objectified, it is another

the already existing sources. (Hormone) Treatment/Therapy is a right. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2956704744401691&set=pcb.2956730784399087&type=3&theater> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

⁴ As shown in a Twitter status³ that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request. The translation of it is available in annex.

⁴ Cis-feminist academic who adopted trans-exclusionary attitudes during social media debates.

⁴ https://zeynepdirek.wordpress.com/2019/08/08/472/?fbclid=IwAR30Hp3VBirV0fXm1xKBPo_j6N8-dhVmcMVfAN5xf3uJIOLo5GZV-Xpl8ns [Accessed: 15 November 2019]

⁴ ... “erkekliğin hepimizin içinde olduğunu ve ilişki kurma biçiminde ortaya çıkabileceğini öne sürdüm.”

⁴ İnsanların ezilme sebebi olan bir şeyin, yani bedensel olarak erkek kodlanmanın, eksik hissettirilmenin, bir dominasyon biçimi olduğunu iddia etmek için kalpsiz bi canavar olmak lazım.

⁴ These quotes are taken from a Facebook and Twitter status that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request.

⁴ These quotes are taken from a Twitter status that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request.

thing to restrict femininity and feminism to women's bodies."⁵ In this debate process, many queer activists tried to underline that feminism should not be restricted to cis women alone. Some of what I call "gender critical feminists" seem to overlook that they are using the same sources and discourses that sprout from the binary gender system that has incited feminism to take shape in the first place.

At the same time, Öznur also defines bodies as "*amor fati*."⁵ She writes an imaginary dialogue between herself and her child, claiming that

your body is your foundation, your reality, in a way your fate, just like where you were born, like you. *Amor fati*. You should love it. A penis or a beard will not make you a man; you are not lacking, after all. If you were to decide otherwise, of course, when you are 16-17 we'll see, but don't do this just to become a "man." "What" you are is not your anatomy.⁵

2

These biological references re-emphasize the binary gender system, implying that whatever one does they will not be able to change their bodies. Öznur dismisses the whole trans narrative around the body, overlooking the fact that the regulations and signifiers around "anatomy" are but a part of trans individuals' struggle. Thus, this discourse is biologically restrictive: becoming a "full-bodied" woman or man would be a mere fantasy – a fantasy that queer people persist in believing.

Similar to Zeynep, Öznur states:

Lately, we have fallen into an excessive "hunt for phobic expressions," targeting, and cyber-attacks against feminist academics, particularly the ones who are visible on social media, who are allies, and who are "moderate" as per their definition, but are considered to be alone and naïve. Of course, these attacks are aimed at wearing out all of radical feminism.⁵

3

Additionally, she called out the angry posts by queer activists while advising everyone to adopt "transforming, affirmative political language and approach that enable the formation of allyships to predominate"⁵ and highlighted that "all of us are responsible to the best of our abilities for preventing

⁵ Dişi beden dediğiniz şeyi içine sokulduğu abject yerden çıkarmak için olumlamak başka; kadınlığı, hatta feminist hareketi o bedene kilitlemek başka şey. ikincisini Trans ve queer dışlayıcı çeteler yapıyor.

⁵ Love of fate, accepting one's fate over things.

⁵ This quote is taken from a Facebook status that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request.

"Bedeninse temelin, gerçekliğin, bir yerde kaderin, doğduğun yer gibi, ben gibi. Amor fati. Seveceksin. Pipi, sakal seni erkek yapmayacak, zaten eksik değilsin. Ha olsun dersen de ne ala, 16-17 yaşında oluruna bakarız ama bunu 'ekek' olmanın şartı diye yapma, ne'liğin anatomini değil."

⁵ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2019/08/12/hinc-ve-linc-siyaseti>

⁵ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2019/08/12/hinc-ve-linc-siyaseti>

"Hareketlerimizin geçmişine, dayanışma ruhuna aykırı olan bu hasmane tavırların ve linç kültürünün siyasetimize yerleşmemesi için elimizden geleni yapmak hepimizin sorumluluğu... Hareketlerin tarihinde asıl amaç hep karşılıklı dönüşüm olmuştu. Belli ezilen, mağdun konumları arasında hiyerarşiler tesis etmek, linç bu gruplar arasında hegemonya aracı haline getirmek son derece tehlikeli bir yaklaşımdır. Dönüştürücü, olumlayıcı, ittifaklar oluşturmaya imkan veren bir siyasi dilin ve yaklaşımın hakim olmasını temenni ediyorum."

hostile behaviours that are contradictory to the spirit of solidarity, and lynching culture from settling into our politics.”⁵

5

Related to abovementioned points, Eren, a queer activist and lawyer, frames TERFs’ call out for empathy and dialogue as “white cis fragility:”

In our struggle with transphobic people, TERFs, I am very sorry to say to the cis white crew and some feminists: you insistently cut off some parts that were written by queer activists with caps lock on, claiming that “queer activists lynch people.” This is white fragility.⁵

6

Many trans academics and activists mentioned trans anger and its rightfulness in their struggle against trans-exclusionary tendencies. On another social media post, Joyn, a queer activist, Joyn, highlights cis white academics’ privilege:

...Trans people raised their voices against some arguments that were nonsense, such as “hormone blockers may be harmful to them,” “trans children should love their bodies,” or “since trans women have experienced masculinity, they may act masculine.” The cis-feminist party accused queers of displaying an angry discourse and some of the queers fell for this. Whether you like it or not, let trans women express their anger. This is not your decision to make. I think cis-feminists’ suggestions of addressing the issue philosophically, inviting people to have coffee over the issue, or offering to stop talking on social media, not calling out transphobia etc. I think that all of these are reflective of cis white privilege and are another kind of mansplaining.⁵

⁵ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2019/08/12/hinc-ve-linc-siyaseti>

“Hareketlerimizin geçmişine, dayanışma ruhuna aykırı olan bu hasmane tavırların ve linç kültürünün siyasetimize yerleşmemesi için elimizden geleni yapmak hepimizin sorumluluğu.”

⁵ TERF, transfobik kişilerle mücadelemizde cis beyaz tayfanın, ısrarla bazı feministlerin, aktivistlerin yazılarından, caps lock on’la yazılan, sert buldukları yerleri kesip insanları linç ediyorsunuz diye paylaşımları, çok üzgünüm ama yine bir beyaz kırgınlığı. İnsanların yazdıkları onlarca paragraftan, sert bulduğunuz yerleri kesip tartışmaya sadece üslup eleştirerek dahil olmanız, transfobik bir toplum yaratmak için medya tarafından yıllarca kullanılan bir yöntem aslında. 90’lar anahaber bültenlerinin transları canavarlaştırmak için kullandığı “travesti dehşeti” editi uyguluyorsunuz yazılarımıza, travestinin dehşete düşürdüğü masum türk halkı gözlüğüyle okuyorsunuz yazılarımızı.

<https://www.facebook.com/iyibircocukolursanbelkisirinleribilegorebilirsin/posts/10219447639564412> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10157515985412498&set=a.87614047497&type=3&theater> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

Yazdıklarımın özeti transların öfkelerini görmezden gelip şu şekilde tartışalım demek bence cis beyaz ayrıcalığı ve akademik ayrıcalık. Translara karşı safсата olan, onlara bloker-hormon zararlı olabilir kullanmayın, Trans çocuklar bedenlerini sevsin, Trans kadınlar erkeklik deneyimi yaşadı, ondan eril olabilir diyenlere karşı sözünü yükseltti translar. Karşı taraf “üslup” tartışmasına girdi ve bazılarınız bu “zokayı” yutuyor. Siz beğenseniz beğenmeseniz Trans kadınlar öfkelerini dışa vuruyorsa bırakın vursunlar, söz sizde değil. Sosyal medyada tartışılıyorsa, bırakın tartışılsın. Konuyu felsefi yönden ele alma, kahve içmeye davet etme, sosyal medyada konuşmama, ifşa etmeme, izan vb önerileriniz bence o cis beyaz ayrıcalığı ve had bildirme, bir çeşit mansplanning.

Around the same period, Öznur claimed that the debate on TERF “is endemic to Europe and North America. It doesn’t reflect the circumstances of our country.”⁵ In response, the Twitter flood of Haziran, another queer activist and a journalist, stated:

To summarize, contrary to what Hale⁵ has written, trans inclusion discussions are not a western import. This has been the effect of the rising new right-wing politics in the West. We see traces of this right-wing politics in leftist xenophobics as well as in TERFs’ feminism⁶ in Turkey.

Ultimately, Haziran is reminding us that trans inclusive feminism must organize against rising right-wing politics alongside liberals and leftists, which is not the case for Turkey’s TERF context. Another visible queer activist and performer, Iris, shared a long text explaining cis privilege:⁶

not facing phobia while looking for jobs, being able to access health and educational services, being paid the same rate, not feeling traumatized for being born in the wrong body, not having to prove one’s womanhood in hospitals, being able to hold a position in academia.

Following this thread, many queer/trans activists highlighted the non-existence of trans academics in feminist or gender studies fields because of socio-economic reasons, with many being forced into precarious works (i.e. sex work or service industry, or freelancing). “Being able to pass” (as cis or normatively beautiful/handsome) would define how individuals would be treated in social contexts. If trans individuals have the privilege to come out to their families and be accepted/supported, they would be more advantaged than other trans individuals who had to run away from their families and support themselves, because the whole transition process itself is bounded to economic support (from surgeries to hormone therapy).⁶ This process also determines the affordability of education for trans individuals: if they have to support themselves, they may not be able to continue university-level education. In that sense, many queer activists who argued against TERFs were already occupying privileged positions: they had institutional access, they could read English texts, or had access to queer theory literature.

Having access to the academic formation or sources would define one’s position and visibility in this debate in particular, and would define means of doing activism in general. During these social media

⁵ This quote is taken from a Facebook status that we will not link to in order to preserve the anonymity of the original author as per their request.

“Avrupa’da da en ufak bir tartışma yürüten herkes TERF –Trans dışlayıcı feminist ilan edilir- bu yöntem münferit değil sistematiktir. Bu tartışma Avrupa’ya ve Kuzey Amerika’ya özgüdür, ülkemizin koşullarını yansıtmaz, elbette ülkemizde bu tartışmayı yürütenin, bunun nasıl yapılacağıın siyasi sorumluluk gerektiren bir analizi, eleştirisi yapılmalıdır.”

⁵ A feminist who produces knowledge in the fields of human rights and gender, and translates from English to Turkish.

⁶ <https://twitter.com/hazirandu2kan/status/1164144418800246785> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

kısaca özetlemem gerekirse, hale'nin yazdığıın aksine bu terf kavgasında feminist siyasete batı'dan gelen "Trans kapsayıcılık tartışmaları" değil, batıda gelişen yeni sağcılıktır. bu sağcılığın izlerini solda mülteci düşmanlarında, feminizmde ise terflerde görüyoruz.

⁶ https://twitter.com/irismozalar/status/1159367291869499392?fbclid=IwAR3H1u12Li-Ck-srfMs1rw_n5cnMDqa_qsPe1EZghyLGPQrAWDG0hwwl1M [Accessed 16 February 2020]

⁶ Kaos GL, an LGBTI+ NGO in Ankara, recently published a comprehensive research on the LGBTI+ employment in Turkey. http://www.kaosgilderneqi.org/publication_detail.php?id=292 [Accessed 16 February 2020]

debates, there were actually many people who did not explicitly state their opinion. This caused the constant invisibility of their stance, especially for trans men. Although the debate was their concern as well, many of them stated that they felt excluded because of the constant focus on feminism, womanhood, and trans women. Thus, one should constantly be aware of ever-changing characteristics of privilege and its various contexts.

Beren, a queer activist who had been very active from the onset of the escalation of events, highlighted that the relevance of academic standards should be taken into consideration instead of academic formation as a whole:

If Turkish linguists act politically wrong while working in Kurdish linguistics, if white genetic engineers act politically wrong when working with black people, if cis individuals introduce politically unacceptable arguments on trans identities, then academic standards are violated: the researcher's bias manipulates the study. So perhaps the basis of producing verifiable information should be bound to academic standards rather than academic freedom...

For many intersectional queer feminists, the whole debate was another spectrum of showing solidarity and supporting trans women's rights in predominantly heterosexual settings, as Haziran points out:

As feminists who take position against TERFs + SWERFs,⁶ our only common argumeñt is: sex workers should have equal rights and security with other proletarians, trans women should have equal rights and security with cis women. In this way, we can protect the lives of these people who are pushed into criminality. History has shown us the results of ignorance on differences and different needs thousands and thousands of times: upper class, white, cis, straight, and privileged women will gain more space and visibility in each every. This is liberal.⁶

Being not obliged to think about one's positionality is directly linked to a privileged position and feeds neo-liberal social settings where everyone serves for oneself. Many queer activists who took a position against TERFs perceived this struggle as forming a block against neoliberalism.

After the second debate, many LGBTI+ organizations and university's LGBTI+ clubs published statements that support trans women's and queer positions (Erktolia, ODTÜ LGBT, Kaos GL, Spod,⁶

⁶ When I had started writing this paper, the same feminist group had arguments on "how sex work commodifies woman's bodies," which were perceived as anti-porn and anti-kink by many queer activists. This was seen as the second and expected phase of TERFs aligning with SWERFs. I will not be able to delve on these issues due to the limits of this paper. However, I think it is relevant to realize how these positions can merge easily and can be complementary to each other.

⁶ <https://twitter.com/hazirandu#kan/status/1178658923575943169> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

"Terf+swerflere karşı konumlanan feministler olarak bizim tek ortak argümanımız şu: seks işçileri diğer proleterlerle, Trans kadınlar sis kadınlarla eşit haklara ve güvenceye sahip olmalı. Bu sayede kriminal yaşamlara itilen bu kişilerin yaşamlarını koruyabiliriz. Bütün bu farklılıkları ve farklı ihtiyaçları görmezden gelip herkesi "kadın" çatısı altında toplama çabanızın sonucunda en çok sesi çıkanın üst sınıf, beyaz, sis, hetero ve allahına kadar ayrıcalıklı kadınlar olacağını tarih bize binlerce, binlerce kez gösterdi. Liberal olan bu"

⁶ http://spod.org.tr/TR/Detay/84/4/terf-tartismalarina-iliskin-aciklama?fbclid=IwAR1kSa60jpL8KCjtzMdPogREiNgLauaaeKpl3T2_LG-ofbpygYxuE_OqaPc [Accessed 16 February 2020]

Lambdaistanbul). The recent statement from the Ankara Bar Association came as a surprise,⁶ since none of the activists thought the Bar Association interested in LGBT-related issues.

Conclusion

Activism in Turkey has been condensed to being able to have certain discussions on social media, after the ban of physical events, especially in the last 5 years. Many activists who can see the problem that has been piling up for decades, including myself, were in favor of face to face meetings since social media has certain limitations when discussing such important issues. Although this did not happen in those days, while I was writing this paper, many feminist and queer organizations got together to form solidarity networks on the basis of trans-inclusive feminism while fighting against the state's oppressions.⁶ Thus, the outcomes of these social media debates were not all negative.

Many cis-feminists defended themselves by claiming TERF is not a local concept that would fit into "our culture;" it is rather an imported debate. As I aimed to remind other discussions around "who counts as feminist," the debate itself was not newly introduced into the feminist and trans/queer community. On the contrary, it has a long-lasting history that awaits to be resolved. Similar to Anglo-American contexts, cis-feminist academics in İstanbul were criticized because of their lack of addressing hierarchies, certain embodied privileges, and class throughout the TERF debate.

Trans individuals have been overlooked by both the regulatory system that could prevent potential violent encounters and their cis-feminist and LGB counterparts. That was the reason behind the emergence of self-organized trans activist groups back in 2007. Neither these arguments nor the cis feminist attitude against trans individuals were new in that sense. I find it difficult to understand the not being able to realize the commonalities between women's and queer/trans individual's issues, as they are caused by a predominantly patriarchal, heteronormative world. Since trans women are treated like women, cis women should be very well aware of misogyny, violence, harassment, and the pressure that they might be surrounded by.

I have to point out the invisibility of trans men throughout this debate, and I believe it would be another interesting and challenging point to delve into in the future. In personal conversations, many trans men activists shared with me their frustration regarding the constant focus on trans women's subjectivity. Because the whole debate was focused on "the male privilege of trans women" and their "potential of being aggressors in feminist circles," trans men's subjectivity seemed to be overlooked on the basis of their "biology."

The women movement's main and contemporary agenda has been alimony rights and abortion; on the other hand, many queer-identified activists struggle against the state's highly regulated transition

⁶ <https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/ankara-barosu-insan-haklari-korumasi-altinda-olan-cinsiyet-kimliklerine-hak-tartisma-konusu-edilemez> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

⁶ <https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/dayanisma-yasatir-yol-haritasini-belirledi?fbclid=IwAR2b40RIQyQVFhOY9ogKZhHJGewD6IB4-AFpoHkWZHc8itgHuT13tBixiNo> [Accessed 16 February 2020]

processes and obligatory surgeries. Thus, intersectionality is crucial in taking concrete steps towards more inclusive ways of doing feminist activism. If LGBTI+ and feminist struggles are against social pressure and rigid categories of gender, both groups should be able to find ways to build solidarities through commonalities. In a world that cannot break the normalcy of cissexism and transphobia, none of the individuals would be safe from state powers' oppressive acts that tend to overlook women and LGBTI+ communities. Activists from both sides should be able to reflect on various positionalities, advantages, and disadvantages on different scales more often than we are used to since these are not static positions. If gender is a spectrum, every person on this spectrum would have certain advantages as well as disadvantages depending on their positionality, keeping in mind that being able to avoid thinking or talking about privilege itself is a privileged position.

Consequently, I imagine queer feminism as a harmonious dance that occasionally comes together and draws apart. It means opening up space for each other to share, experiment, fail, and shake the taken-for-grantedness of feminism with contradicting, ever-changing performances of queer individuals. I would also describe it as a constant attempt to form alliances and build distinct forms of solidarities. After reading about alliances between feminist and queer movements, I now realize the hard work of achieving them: it takes time, self-reflection, being open to dialogue, and being able to see the commonalities.

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