The emergence of a “third space”?

Critical scholars from Turkey[1]
Challenges and opportunities in Germany

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In the last two decades, democracy, human rights, and freedoms, especially academic freedom, have been challenged by populist right-wing and authoritarian regimes in Turkey, and many other countries around the world. Many who have raised their voices in opposition, including academics, artists, and journalists, have been forced to leave their country due to increasing pressures, conflicts, and wars.

Since January 11, 2016, the lives of the Academics for Peace (AfP, or BAK in Turkish) from Turkey who were the signatories of the "Peace Petition" entitled "We will not be a party to this crime" have changed drastically. These scholars will be called critical scholars in this article. What characterizes them is that they have criticized the state violence in the Kurdish-populated eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. They are critical of the assignment of rectors to the universities or trustees to the municipalities instead of elected representatives. They are against the state's pressure on elected members of the parliament and oppositional voices such as those of academics or journalists. They fight against increasing nationalism and authoritarianism and criticize the competitive liberal higher education system, which generates precarity, especially for junior scholars. Many of them are social scientists studying topics such as the Kurdish conflict, the Armenian genocide, LGBTQI+, gender, minority and human rights, migration, and refugee issues. After the public announcement of the Peace Petition in Turkey, the signatories, these critical scholars, were attacked by high-ranking state

1 Parts of this study were conducted during my affiliation with Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin, and the article was written at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin as an Einstein Guest Researcher.

officials and organizations, including Turkish President Erdoğan, Prime Minister Davutoğlu, pro-government media, officials of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE: Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu-YÖK), university rectors, public prosecutors, and police, as well as their own students (AfP-Germany, 2021; BAK, 2020; TELE1, 2020). There were attacks by nationalists, such as a pro-governmental mafia leader, who declared that he "will take a shower with the blood of the academics who signed the petition" (SCF, 2017).

Initially, there were 1,128 signatories; their numbers increased to 2,212 after the first attacks. Some of those working in Turkish universities were forced to resign, or their contracts were not extended. The state used the failed coup attempt in July 2016 as a pretext to dismiss the critical scholars by statutory decree laws (*kanun hükmünde kararname* [KHKs]), and blamed them for "terrorist propaganda." From July 2016 to July 2018, 125,000 people were dismissed by means of the KHKs, and around 5,000 were academics (Amnesty International, 2016; Erdem, 2018; Sade, 2020). Dismissal by KHK means that there will not be any job opportunities available in the public or private sectors and that the scholars' passports will be confiscated to prevent them from leaving the country. This was called "civilian death" (BAK, 2020; Gencel-Bek, 2018).

Some of these critical scholars left the county with short-term scholarships; some could not because their passports were confiscated. One-third of the signatories were PhD students; most were dismissed from their research assistant positions and some lost the professors who were guiding their theses. 822 critical scholars[2] faced criminal court hearings and they received penalties, were taken into custody, or were sent to prison.

There is no automatic recovery process for their return to their previous positions or compensation for the violations of their rights and freedoms, although the Constitutional Court (CC) has decided that "The punishment of academics due to signing the petition is the violation of freedom of expression" (Constitutional Court, 2019). Many of those dismissed scholars

2 A total of 763 were the first group and 59 were the second group of signatories; 108 received up to 36-month penalties, 12 were convicted, 96 were suspended, 719 were acquitted. There are 91 ongoing trials. Four academics in 2016 and a political scientist and mathematician in 2019 were imprisoned. A professor, an environmental activist, having pro-Kurdish *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP; Peoples Democratic Party) connections has been in prison since October 2020 (AfP, 2020; Amnesty International, 2016; BAK, 2020; TELE1, 2020).

by KHK – 406 people – appealed to the higher courts to return to their posts and get their vested rights (AfP, 2021). Most of these appeals were waiting for the decision by the OHAL Commission (*Olağanüstü Hal Komisyonu* [The State of Emergency Commission]) for around four years. The OHAL Commission refused some of these appeals at the end of October 2021, and there are many scholars still waiting for an answer. Scholars have to engage in lawsuits or appeals, which take time and necessitate financial resources, patience, solidarity, and support. By 2020, most of them had started the process to get new passports. However, those who had privileged green passports for working at public universities over 10 years could not renew them due to having been dismissed (AfP-Germany, 2021; BAK, 2020; Demir-Gürsel, 2017; HRFT, 2019).

Acar and Coşkan (2020, pp. 1–2) have discussed AfP's continuous engagement in scholarly activism, which has been driven by their "being dismissed via decree laws" and their reaction to "injustices." Their ideals about academia and academic freedoms that empower them "to demand for social change." Another study underlined AfP's continuing efforts to "think, debate, engage, teach and write" (Özdemir et al., 2019, p. 252).

Yet, these critical scholars find themselves in additional difficult circumstances once they go abroad. A scholar on a TV program during the fifth year of Peace Petition stated that their coming to Germany with temporary scholarships resulted in uncertainty about their stay abroad. Furthermore, there is uncertainty about their return to previous positions in Turkey (Özer, 2020). Özdemir and colleagues (2019) criticized academia as unsafe due to the neoliberal practices of high "competition and marketization" and "limited full-time positions" for professors. The competitive and scarce full-time positions generate more precarity among the scholars from abroad. To survive, they need to compete for third-party funding, leave academia for business or industry, or leave Germany.

This article argues that even though the critical scholars were dismissed in Turkey and had difficulties as a result of receiving only short-term scholarships in Germany, they established survival mechanisms such as founding solidarity academies and organized solidarity campaigns, and they supported each other during the court hearings guided by BAK-Litigation Coordination. They continue to criticize the increasing authoritarianism in Turkey and abroad and insist on their demand for peace. They have taken part in solidarity and critical networks and contributed to critical knowledge production during the conferences and workshops, considering topics such

as precarious working conditions, refugee – migration, gender, and LGBQI+ issues as well as increasing nationalism and authoritarianism.

In light of the difficulties and their critical engagements, this article will concentrate on three questions: 1) What difficulties do critical scholars face in Germany; 2) What kind of survival and solidarity mechanisms do they develop; and 3) How do they change, challenge, or contribute to their host institutions or German academia?

Methodology

This research was based on 15 in-depth interviews with critical BAK scholars: 10 females and 5 males, and three hosts: one female and two males in Germany. Their ages ranged from 38 to 53 years. Nine of females and two of the males have children. Their career stages ranged from assistant professor to professor, and included one doctoral student. A total of 15 scholar and one host interview were conducted in Turkish, and two host interviews were conducted in English. Fourteen interviews were recorded from February through March 2020, and ranged from 25 to 100 minutes in length. The anonymized interlocutors are presented here as M (male) or F (female) plus age, for example, F1, 44. In addition, relevant parts of three interviews, one published in a newspaper, another streamed on a TV program by a male and two female academics (Özer, 2020), and the third interview was published in taz newspaper in Germany (Gökşin, 2020) and Bianet online in Turkey (Kural, 2017), have been used. The web page of the Academy in Exile (AiE) and the notes taken by the author in their conference were used as well (AiE, 2020).[3]

Results and discussion

The analyses will be structured according to the three main research topics: 1) difficulties, 2) solidarity and networks, and 3) challenges and contributions.

3 AiE was founded in 2017. It is a collaborative project of the Institute for Turkish Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI), Essen, and the Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin. It hosts 59 scholars for three to 24 months and one scholar for three years.

Difficulties

The difficulties can be clustered into three subtopics as follows:

Precarity – uncertainty – loss of control

The scholars who took part in this research had scholarships (or contracts) ranging from a few months to three years. A full professor who had come with her child and husband in 2017 explained the difficulties about short-term scholarships, bureaucratic systems, and passports:

> Two days after the dismissal, we came to Germany . . . the welcome center was closed. I lived with severe depression [in Germany] and had short 3- to 5-month scholarships . . . Then, I had a 21-month scholarship with a contract and another short-term one. Now, they offered me a 50% short contract . . . This is scary . . . I experienced precarity here . . . We have to fight many uncertainties. I did not have a passport [not renewed by Turkey, and no foreigner passport was given in Germany], and we could not travel because of a feeling about loss of control. (F9, 50)

Another scholar also explained the problem of not getting support from the welcome center during the summertime and later (F3, 45). A female associate professor stayed after the coup attempt, and she and her husband survived with short-term scholarships and contracts, but had a few unemployment periods lasting from 4–6 months (F6, 42). A male scholar, after being in two cities with only monthly scholarship in France, came to Germany with a two-year Philipp Schwartz Initiative (PSI) scholarship. He stated that the extension of PSI for another year has been possible since 2019. For this, he arranged a six-month scholarship through a third funding institution that was accepted by PSI, as the funding was not provided by his university (M2, 52). A host confirmed this saying that "when hosts have extra funding," they could contribute to the PSI's third year by adding six months (MHost1, 40).

Moreover, even if the scholarships are for two to three years, they are not designed to contribute to the social security system, which prevents the scholars from unemployment and retirement rights. In Germany, when individuals work continuously for 12 months with a contract, within 30 months, they are entitled to receive unemployment benefits (I am Expat, 2021). Many scholars have raised these issues, and PSI scholars have been offered contracts that contribute to the social security system since 2021. Thus, they are now entitled to the associated benefits and rights.

Nevertheless, the scholars must have long-term residence permits to receive unemployment benefits, which is not possible due to their limited contracts. Their residence permits end immediately or 15–30 days after the end of their contracts. This again terminates their legal rights to receive unemployment salaries. Moreover, the end of a contract determines the end of their housing contracts, placing them in a more precarious position than German scholars. There is the option to apply for a job seeker's visa; if they get it, they can apply for unemployment salaries (Germany Visa, 2021); however, it is an extremely difficult situation, as one female scholar explained:

> The health insurance we had did not even cover my children's vaccinations . . . My son had eye surgery. We paid for it . . . However, the feeling of insecurity is tremendous if something big happens, and we do not have decent insurance that would cover it. Plus, the moment we are unemployed, we will not get any unemployment salary, and we will not be able to retire at any stage of our life. We do not even have a visa [residence permit]. It expires when our contract ends . . . The insecurity part is terrible. (F5, 49)

Having a contract enables the scholars to have public health insurance, which covers more health issues than scholars' inexpensive private insurance.

In addition, the limited number of full-time professorial positions in Germany contributes to a rising feeling of precarity among scholars. A male scholar stated that only the professors are not in precarious circumstances and even many German postdocs might never get a tenured professorship due to the high competition for full-time professorial positions. For this reason, one scholar noted, the critical scholars began to discuss leaving academia (M5, 40). A female host added that the German academic system is very different from other countries. According to her, there was "the urgent necessity" for these scholars to leave Turkey with short-term scholarships; some even came "to take a breath." Yet, the competitive system they have found in Germany makes it difficult for them to survive (FHost, 53).

In sum, most scholars rely on short- and fixed-term arrangements during which they need to finish and publish their research and apply for future competitive opportunities. They are also repeatedly faced with bureaucratic issues on residence permits, health insurance, rearrangement of schools or kindergartens, and house contracts after each short-term extension. Some did not even have valid passports until the beginning of 2020, which restricted their freedom of movement. They perceived precarity, insecurity, loss of control abroad, and insecurity about their return to previous positions, as

was mentioned by another scholar in an interview. All these factors might force them to leave academia, but also might encourage them to collaborate with the locals to challenge the system together.

Inclusion vs. feeling like an appendix: Independent research institutes vs. universities

Another difficulty faced by the scholars is that of inclusion into the German academic system. Our interviews provided evidence that this also depends on the hosting institution. Some scholars offered more positive feedback about independent research institutes compared with universities. A male scholar who came to a research institute in the city center described this:

> There are two master programs in English, which makes it technically easy to collaborate with and adapt into the environment. It is an extraordinarily cooperative and facilitating environment, and provides a wide network from all over the world. (M1, 42)

A signatory couple came to Germany because of the attacks on signatories in other universities and the coup attempt in July. An independent research institute hosted the female scholar for a year. She described it as a collaborative international environment that encouraged her to organize a workshop for "at-risk scholars." She had a nice office and got support for accommodations, schooling, residence permit, and health insurance. After that, she became affiliated with a German university and described this change as "falling down":

> Our presence here [at the university] is perceived as temporary, like a person's appendix. We are supposed to be equal academics ... The host professor did not show any interest when I met him and explained my research and publications. Maybe he was too busy ... They see you as a person – even as a thing – who will occupy one of the rare office spaces. (F1, 44)

Another scholar shared her unfavorable experience with research institutes in two different universities: she had no office space in one and rare contact with the colleagues in the other (F4, 42). Others mentioned shared crowded office spaces or office space on a faraway campus (M3, 38; M4, 47).

Thus, the scholars made more favorable evaluations about independent research institutes, noting the benefits they had received. First, having a pleasant office space generated a collaborative environment and

contact with colleagues. Second, attending or organizing workshops, seminars, and conferences with international scholars increased future collaborations. Third, easing the repetitive bureaucratic mechanism concerning accommodations, schools or kindergartens, residence permits or registrations, etc., was very helpful.

On the other hand, they criticized the universities or some research institutes in the universities for keeping them on the periphery, such as giving them a space in shared, crowded, or faraway campuses. This affected their concentration and limited their contact with other colleagues. Also, some busy professors, they noted, did not see them as valuable international scholars who had valuable experience but only as someone who took up limited space. Lastly, they reported that non-supportive welcome centers, especially during the summertime, made dealing with repetitive bureaucratic issues difficult.

(Re)-Habilitation and vested rights

A major problem has been the non-recognition of academic achievements acquired abroad in Germany and the demand to prove their scholarly experience. The interviewed scholars had requested their right to be recognized in Germany. In particular, redoing the "habilitation"[4] was questioned by all scholars. A senior scholar underlined resettlement of vested rights "to zero" in Germany:

> Our associate professorship title should be recognized as a habilitation . . . The preparation, the book, and then the exam takes one and a half years. Plus it's stressful. Then, when you came here, it was set to zero. (F8, 48)

Associated with this is the limited possibility to get a formal approval for supervising PhD students, as they were able to do in their previous positions in Turkey:

> For the moment, a PhD student asks me to be her supervisor . . . When the student requests, the university administration should decide. Still, there is no positive decision. . . . We started the process [to supervise the PhD

4 Habilitation is a qualification for professorship in Germany and Austria. To achieve this, a monograph or cumulative collection of articles, defense of the thesis, and giving a public lecture and course that shows teaching experience are necessary. See https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/drs/postdocs/career/career_paths/habilitation/index.html. Similar requirements exist for the associate professorship in Turkey and other countries.

> student] and my department is pushing for it. Some PhD students from Turkey started new PhDs here because their courses were not recognized. This is demotivating. However, one mentor put in a great deal effort to gain recognition of the courses of her PhD student, who started to do his thesis here immediately. (F8, 48)

The mentor who managed the get the recognition of the courses underlined that she even asked for an intervention of the international office for bureaucratic issues. But, she added, this requires extra effort and time, and many professors are very busy with their workload in Germany (FHost, 53).

An associate professor who was imprisoned after the Peace Petition came to a small town in Germany in 2017 with a 10-month scholarship, but then returned to Turkey after his PSI application was refused. One year later, he came to Berlin with a job arranged by SAR. He is now a PSI scholar. He worked on his habilitation during which time the university organized a private German teacher to support him. He stated:

> It was a cumulative habilitation, and I wrote two articles . . . and delivered my habilitation thesis that passed the internal jury and outside reviewers. I gave a seminar and a lecture in German. There were three professors, one mitarbeiter [scientific employee], and a student representative on the defense committee. I graduated when my thesis was published in November 2019. (M5, 40)

These examples show that the associate professorship (and professorship) titles acquired in Turkey do not have value and were not accepted as equal to the habilitation in Germany. Yet, having a habilitation does not guarantee a permanent or professorial position, even for a German *privatdozent* (adjunct professor). Moreover, currently, they cannot supervise PhDs, but some are challenging the host institutions on this issue. Besides, recognition of PhD students' previous courses requires much effort and time by professors who have a heavy workload plus administrative tasks. Thus, Germany's competitive, hierarchical higher education system generates precarity for all scholars working with short-term scholarships or contracts, which is even more challenging for those scholars from Turkey or other non-European countries.

Solidarity networks and critical knowledge production

Since 2016, critical scholars in Turkey and abroad have engaged in solidarity and networking activities. They founded alternative centers for knowledge production, such as solidarity academies in the large cities of Ankara, Eskişehir, İzmir, and İstanbul, or smaller cities such as Dersim, or associations, cooperatives, cafes, and libraries like Kültürhane in Mersin. They produce critical knowledge in workshops, conferences, forums, or summer schools while bringing the signatories and their students together. One of these is Kocaeli Solidarity Academy (KODA), founded by dismissed scholars from Kocaeli University in 2016 (AfP-Germany, 2020; Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2017; KODA, 2021; Bianet, 2017b).

Over 200 critical scholars from Turkey took part in the AfP-Germany network. Most of them are members of the *Wissenschaftler*innen für den Frieden* (Academics for Peace–Germany Association) founded in Berlin in 2017 (AfP-Germany, 2021; Artı TV, 2021). Some are members of the online university platform and association, Off-University, that brings "dismissed scholars and their students" together in free online lectures and conferences (Off-University, 2017; Özer, 2020). Others are members of the Academics in Solidarity (AiS) based at the Freie Universität Berlin developing a peer-mentoring program for exiled and established scholars (AiS, 2019). They have contacts with female and migration networks such as Puduhepa or critical academic networks such as *Assoziation für kritische Gesellschaftsforschung* (Association for Critical Social Research) (AkG, 2018) and syndicates specialized in education such as *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (Education and Science Union) (GEW, 2019). Many have contacts with at-risk institutes such as Scholars at Risk (SAR, n.d.). They are fellows of foundations including the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and its Philipp Schwartz Initiative (PSI), the Einstein Foundation, or AiE program (AiE, 2020; AvH, n.d.; Einstein Foundation, n.d.).

The critical scholars emphasized the solidarity and support among them. One mentioned receiving support from AfP-Germany for bureaucratic issues and arranging workshops (F4, 42). Another explained the help of networks connected to AfP-Germany, including lawyers, doctors, and schools (F6, 42). A third underlined the importance of having a network and institution (AfP-Germany) that provides the opportunity to "speak institutionally and politically" (F7, 39). A male scholar noted that colleagues from AfP-Germany have connections with left-leaning parties such as Die Linke and Greens

or foundations like those of Rosa Luxemburg and Heinrich Boell, or trade unions and activists from the Kurdish movement (M3, 38). Another scholar, who returned to Turkey after receiving scholarships for five months from two institutions, came to Germany with an Einstein scholarship in 2021. He emphasized the support from the network:

> Following the trials, I applied to various scholarships in Germany with the help of scholars [from BAK]. My two friends here [one from BAK, one from Off-University] are like half of Berlin for me. I solved many problems by asking them for help. I also attended one day of Off-University's workshop in 2019. (M3, 38)

A full professor, who went to France with a short-term scholarship after being threatened by her students and then became a PSI fellow in Germany, said:

> I am a member of AfP-Germany, and active in the feminist – queer researcher network with some other signatories working on gender studies . . . I taught a seminar at Off-University. A PhD and a postdoc came to my city via my connections. I am a member of GEW and am working on my project about Academics in Germany. I helped GEW establish a lab on gender, and we will develop a network for PhDs working on gender issues. (F2, 53)

Many solidarity and support workshops were organized by and for AfP-Germany and Off-University networks, such as those on German and European research funding opportunities.[5] In some colloquia, the research proposals of PhD students and postdocs have been supported (F8, 48, F3, 45; Dressler, 2020). They gave free lectures and seminar series to Turkish-speaking communities, as the one in Cemevi Berlin (Berlin Alevite Community) in 2018 (Cemevi, 2018). After the pandemic, the AfP-Germany network transformed its gathering designed to exchange information and discuss specific topics (also cook together) in *Mahalle* (Neighborhood) into an online forum called *Sanal Mahalle* (Digital Neighborhood). They discussed topics such as gender, state politics or COVID etc (AfP-Germany, 2020). In addition, they organized a solidarity campaign for their colleagues in Turkey (Önaldı, 2017), and a new fund-raising campaign on "The academic solidarity across borders" was initiated (ASaB, 2021). Moreover, the AfP members in

5 Such as the author's contribution in the Off-University project workshop with Dr. J. Strutz and B. Bayraktar in Bielefeld, June 8–10, 2018 or the BAK-Off project workshop, Berlin, December 6–7, 2018 with Dr. S. Kirmse.

Turkey were calling the signatories by phone to check their current situation after a newly graduated signatory committed suicide in February 2017 who left to "civilian death" without any job or fellowships (Bianet, 2017a). They either called or sent emails to the approximately 700 PhD students or research assistants who had originally signed the petition, asking them to update their academic, financial, or psychological situation. This solidarity responsibility was inherited by a group from AfP-Germany in 2019. They also supported and guided them to voluntary mentors and psychologists via established networks. They shared calls for scholarships or conferences, guided them in their applications for scholarships, and shared information related to bureaucratic or administrative issues. The members distributed information via their listserve *Doktora öğrencisi ve araştırma asistanı destek grubu* (DAD, PhD student and research assistant support group), solidarity academies, and people on the AfP network.

Challenges and contributions

The interviewed critical scholars cited examples of how they challenged the host and funding institutions, which resulted in additional opportunities within the system such as the extension of PSI scholarship for another year or new opportunities like the AiE program (AiE, 2020). They also talked about their contribution to German academia on critical topics and their publications. Some criticized the local scholars for their acceptance of the neoliberal and competitive system leading to precarity for PhDs and postdocs "as a given" without doing anything (F8, 48).

On the other hand, one scholar said their challenges were small, and bigger challenges could be possible when they continuously collaborated with the critical scholars in Germany, such as when they opened several panels at the AkG conference in 2018 (F7, 39).

The interlocutors involved in this research mentioned that the AvH foundation has been one of the most collaborative institutions because it listens and takes notes about scholars' challenges and tries to provide solutions. One example is the extension of PSI fellowships for "6+6 months," which was brought to the agenda by the scholars during the conferences, and increasing the lump sum given to the host institutions in 2019 (AvH, n.d.). One critical scholar underlined their active involvement during a conference in 2018. She added that the scholars who constituted this new intellectual migration had made contributions with their critical approaches:

> We [AfP-Germany] were prepared well and presented the challenges about the scholarships, residence permits, or health insurances, and PSI, SAR, and our hosts listened to us. A German scholar has made a very critical speech [about the problems we face here]. There is no discussion. We have influence . . . and we attract much attention within the new wave of intellectual migration, which is not only white-collar but also golden collar . . . Many products [publications] will come out in a few years . . . When I first talked about the German education system's insensitivity to neoliberalism, even my mentor was resisting. Now, we [together] are using this critical approach in our research. (F2, 53)

A male scholar said that they have an impact, but it is "within the priorities and policies" of Germany's donor organizations and educational institutions (M1, 42). A law scholar advocated for a one-year extension of PSI fellowships for pregnant scholars, which she underlined as "a legal right in Germany" (F8, 48). The issue raised here pertains to the problems faced by PSI scholars who need to present their requests for fellowships, convince the funding organization of their eligibility, and request the support mechanisms that exist for other fellowships of the same institution (AvH) and which are often not considered for them. For example, a female scholar with children who receives a George Foster scholarship awarded by AvH has the right to request a one-year extension. Moreover, other AvH scholarship holders have the right to take intensive German courses before the start of the fellowship, making their adaptation and resettlement process easier, while PSI scholars have to cover their language courses from the lump sum provided to their hosts when receiving their fellowship. Indeed, it is not easy to do everything at one time: resettle, register, find schools for children, start German courses, conduct their research, publish, and apply for future funding in two (or three) years. In addition, all previously funded AvH scholars become alumni and have the right to request short-term scholarships in the future, but this is not yet the case for PSI scholars.

A host and a signatory to the petition stated that they challenged the Einstein Foundation's policy which is based on one host–one scholar by applying on behalf of eight critical scholars from two departments (MHost2, 45).

Another scholar made this point:

> We knew to be critical wherever we have been . . . Once, I told the previous foreign minister that "the system in Germany will never include us, and we

> will continue to be precarious." The Chairman of Humboldt [Foundation] strongly opposed me. Many scholars are doing research on precarity now (F10, 45)

One host noted their support for the scholars' contributions: "I am happy with new critical topics and discussions toward the neoliberal university system raised by AfP. I am not sure how long it will continue. . . . It is essential to have partners in critical discussions" (FHost, 53).

Most interlocutors mentioned that they gave lectures in English, even if it was not required of them as part of their teaching. They explained that they were searching for ways to supervise PhD students and were serving as second supervisors for master's students. They also actively organized collaborative colloquia for the students (F2, 53; F3, 45; F5, 40; F6, 42; F7, 39; F8, 48; F9, 50; M1, 42).

In sum, these scholars are contributing and continue to contribute to the German academic system with their publications and critical perspectives that have opened up new discussions. This underlines the importance of having highly qualified scholars from Turkey included in the German system who will contribute more in the long term.

Concluding remarks: From guest worker to guest researcher

The research findings suggest that critical scholars from Turkey face difficulties due to short-term scholarships, non-recognition of vested rights (associate professorship) and previously taken courses (for PhDs). There is a foreign bureaucratic system which is difficult to navigate with limited German language capabilities, and they are being kept on the periphery of academia in some institutions. Some have not been able to obtain new passports, therefore their freedom of movement is restricted.

Their positions are more precarious than those of native Germans. The problems in connection with short-term scholarships also affect social security, retirement and unemployment rights, health insurance, and bureaucratic issues. Yet, because around 90% of scholars working in academia have positions lower than professorships with limited contracts or fellowships, they all work in the same neoliberal and competitive academic system based on "marketization and hierarchization" (Özdemir et al., 2019, p. 252). Therefore, a structural change in favor of academia necessitates the

collaboration of all scholars in Germany. The scholars agree that they have to challenge and influence the host and funding institutions through their collective or private efforts. Their efforts can be more effective if they organize (F2, 53) and collaborate with critical German (F7, 39) and international scholars. It is too early to say if the aforementioned solidarity initiatives will have an effect on German academia, but it is certainly worth observing how these initiatives affect other initiatives and debates in a system where it is recognized that precarity has become the rule rather than the exception.

However, it must be noted that the German academic system offers an exit point to the critical scholars, similar to the local PhDs and postdocs, to leave academia in favor of industry or opening their start-up businesses instead of waiting for professorial positions. This issue has been discussed during the conferences organized by PSI (AvH), risk institutions, or solidarity programs such as AiS since 2019 (M5, 40; see AiS, 2020).

Despite these difficulties, the scholars continue to develop solidarity mechanisms and establish associations or solidarity academies in Turkey and abroad. They help their colleagues in Turkey with their applications abroad and establish contact with possible mentors. Moreover, a group of scholars from AfP-Germany continues to follow the signatories in need and organizes solidarity campaigns.

Critical scholars challenge the funding and host institutions to develop cooperative mechanisms and create additional opportunities while pushing the boundaries. In addition, they organize workshops and conferences and publish articles and books, the number of which is increasing. They give lectures and seminars in English and contribute to their institutions' internationalization (F2, 53; F8, 48; M1, 42; see Özer, 2020).

Moreover, they contribute to critical knowledge production and open new topics on precarity and the neoliberal system in German academia, which is perceived positively by German scholars, like the host professor interviewed in this research (FHost, 53). They criticize the authoritarianism and increasing nationalism in Turkey and other countries. They engage in political activism such as organizing campaigns or demonstrations about the imprisonment of their colleagues, such as for Prof. Dr. Üstünel or Assoc. Prof. Altınel in 2019, or illegitimate assignment of rectors, such as the case at Bosphorus University (Yalaf, 2021). They insist on demanding peace in Turkey and abroad and fight against injustices wherever they are (Acar & Coşkan, 2020).

Germany is a country of migration, not only "becoming a country of migration," as Chancellor Merkel said (DW, 2015). However, the policies

toward immigrants show a short-term perspective. In the 1960s, "guest workers" were supposed to leave two or three years after they came from Turkey. Now, intellectual, "golden-collar" immigrant guest researchers have become more common in Germany. However, if uncertainty, precarity, and keeping critical scholars on the edge of academia continue in Germany (F1, 44; F4, 47; M1, 42; see Özer, 2020), a small sign of normalization and democratization will make their return to Turkey quicker. Germany had a similar experience when highly qualified German citizens with immigrant backgrounds returned to Turkey after the EU negotiations resulted in a democratization and peace process that lasted until 2013, since then the pressures increased in the country. In 2010, the "negative migration balance of Germany vis-à-vis Turkey was 5,862 individuals" (Focus Migration, 2012, p. 1).

The following statement by a female scholar who returned to Turkey a few months after this interview explains the current conditions and the decision involved in whether to stay or leave:

> To stay here, I need to have peace with what academia means in Germany: to talk and think in a more isolated environment, design your life in accordance with future projects, and concentrate on bringing new funding . . . We are at a border between entering into it and not. My brain is in a state of being in limbo. If I stay [in Germany], I need to concentrate on my big project. If I decide to return, I need to concentrate on my associate professorship. In Turkey, I have to think about the earthquake and the war. It is uncomfortable to think about returning to Turkey when you have a child while living in peace and prosperity here. On the one hand, we had a friendly environment [Turkey] where I always felt comfortable. I used to be something here also, but we all know what I am here [an "appendix"]. I remember my students [there] . . . They were the most essential and rare elements left to us. Although I was very bored with the teaching load . . . our relations with students were meaningful . . . Despite some students spying on us . . . I still hope that we could impress even the AKP supporter students . . . I miss our relationship with students . . . I am still in between staying or leaving. (F, 44)

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