

Transnational Entanglements of Queer Solidarity

Berlin Walks with Istanbul Pride March

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It is the 1st of July 2018, a warm summer day in Berlin. I pass through pedestrians as I walk towards the public square where a crowd is slowly gathering. Turkish pop song lyrics rise from the amplifiers. In a few minutes, the Istanbul LGBTI+ march will start despite the ban by the Governor's office of Istanbul.¹ This year, for the first time, the organising committee rescheduled the march from the last Sunday of June (to commemorate the Stonewall Riots of 1969) to avoid overlapping with the Ramadan holiday of Turkey's Muslim majority. As I pass the last crosswalk before mingling with the crowd, I notice the big pink banner that I helped to prepare. The glittery letters of ISTANBUL PRIDE gleam in the sunlight. We are at Hermannplatz, the vibrant square of Berlin's Neukölln borough. The destination of the Walk is Oranienplatz, a square in the famous migrant district of Kreuzberg, also known as Little Istanbul.

Over the following few hours, small groups disperse and meet with each other in alleys and corners in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul, just like they have done since 2015, in order to outsmart the police. In Berlin, in the meantime, we walk along the artery connecting the two districts, accompanied by the big banner, a van with amplifiers blasting out Turkish and Kurdish songs and by German police officers who loosely encircle the demonstration. This is the event *Berlin Walks with Istanbul Pride March*.

Approximately 1000 people are shouting slogans and carrying placards and banners, using words from the queer slang *lubunca* and humour with which I am familiar from the LGBTI+ activist repertoire in Turkey.² Placards merge various languages and references: 'Lubunya Gücü! Queer Power!', 'Queer & Muslimisch ist KEIN Widerspruch!' ('Queer & Muslim is NOT contradiction!') or 'Yasak ne Ayol!' ('What is ban Ayol!') and more.³ The popular slogan of *lubun* circles echo on the streets of Berlin: 'Nerdesin Aşkım?' ('Where are you my love?') someone asks. 'Burdayım Aşkım!' ('Here I am my love!') the crowd shouts back. Happy selfies are taken and posted online with the hashtag *lubunPrideBerlin*. Celebratory captions accompany the pictures on social media.

14.1 The poster of the Berlin Walks with Istanbul Pride combining symbolic architectures of two cities: the Galata Tower, the Brandenburger Tor and the plate of Hermannplatz subway station. Retrieved from the Facebook event page.



During and after the Walk, I collected various comments on how *BWIP* had ‘brought Istanbul to Berlin’. Such comments implied that the event blurred the distance between locations, enacting an experience close to the carnivalesque atmosphere of Istanbul Pride before 2016. On the one hand, the approximation was talked about as an example of a much-needed act, especially in this particular time of history, when transnational queer solidarity has come under threat in conservative authoritarian states ruled by anti-gender governments, such as those of Turkey, Poland and Hungary. On the other hand, some of the Turkey-based activists said they did not find the event empowering, and pointed out the differences between the historical and political contexts of Berlin and Istanbul, and the material realities of those inhabiting them. Shouting the same slogans, carrying the same banners, dancing to the same songs at the same time had surfaced the unequal vulnerability of the bodies that appear on the streets in Berlin and Istanbul.

The responses intrigued me both as one of the organisers of the event in Berlin and as an anthropologist who thinks about the translocal entanglements of queer conditions and activism. Therefore, in considering the example of the Berlin Solidarity Walk, I explore the uneasiness of transnational queer solidarity across differences configured by borders. In the first section of the chapter, I situate the Walk against the backdrop of new wave migration from Turkey to Germany. Then I address the ambivalent position of Turkish and Kurdish queer migrants at the intersection of privilege and racialised otherness. In the second section, I argue that the transnational attachments of Berlin-based *lubuns* to Turkey’s queer movements complicate the experience of geographical distance and neatly bounded locales. In the example of the Berlin Solidarity Walk, I suggest that *restlessness* surfaced as a diasporic affective force and sparked the Solidarity Walk, which

then took a collective form in recontextualising the transnational heritage of LGBT pride in Berlin against the crackdown on queer lives in Turkey.

In addition to my participation and interviews, the discussions and arguments of this paper arise from my engagement with Turkey's queer movements and my affective situatedness in the field. In other words, I depart from my own restlessness across the blurry boundaries of the researched and the researcher. I begin by unpacking the background of the recent political dynamics that require international and diasporic queer solidarity – a pressing matter for Turkey's LGBTI+ movements.

We disperse to Berlin

'This is the last warning! Disperse! And, let life go back to its normal course!' the Turkish police announced, as they typically do right before unleashing tear gas and rubber bullets on demonstrators. This time the addressees were the participants of the 7th Istanbul Trans Pride March in 2016.

In the following week the organising committee of Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week responded to the ban by playing with the wording of the police announcement:

On Sunday, 26 June we will disperse to every single corner of Istiklal Avenue, we are reuniting with each other on every street and avenue in Beyoğlu. Instead of living a life that is imposed on, a life that normalises violence, oppression and denial; we are living the life we chose, the life in which we exist with pride and honour and we are 'Letting life go back to its "normal" course' by:

DISPERSING, DISPERSING, DISPERSING
(LGBTI News Turkey, 2016)

All-day long, crowds dispersed and assembled in the side streets of Beyoğlu, in small squares and on the ferry, as well as on Instagram live streams and Twitter hashtags. The committee press release was read over and over again wherever possible, and its videos were shared online. The slogan *dağılıyoruz* ('We disperse') echoed throughout the streets of the historically renowned queer centre Taksim-Beyoğlu (Biricik 2010; Çetin 2016) and beyond. Articulated by 'a group whose solidarity rests on a common and forcible exclusion from public space', the slogan 'We disperse' signified fluidity and spontaneity in response to the police and historical continuity by alluding to the restricted spatial mobility of queers. The appearance and disappearance of queer bodies in multiple places at the same time defined a new queer activist practice and emerged as an innovative 'form that freedom of assembly might take when it is explicitly denied as a right' (Butler, 2015). What the movement did was neither simple compliance nor 'straight' refusal, but a playful subversion of the police order into a novel example of dissent and solidarity in the face of state violence.

The authoritarian crackdown on dissidence had been increasing since the summer of 2013, when the nationwide anti-government *Gezi* protests challenged the sovereignty of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the single-handed leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Regarded as the largest anti-government mobilisation in the

history of the Republic, *Gezi* was a turning point for the LGBTI+ movement in Turkey. During the occupation of Gezi Park, which initially protested against the reconstruction of an Ottoman-era artillery barrack and the planned demolishment of one of the last green areas in Istanbul, *LGBT Blok* (LGBT Block) took an active role in organising everyday life in the occupied area. The block built up alliances with several groups such as anti-capitalist Muslims and football hooligans, which were uncommon encounters and allies for queer circles in the public imaginary. Due to these unusual alliances and the plurality of its components, *Gezi* itself was argued to be 'a queer becoming in togetherness that transgressed self-castigating sensations of anxiety and fear in the face of state violence' (Zengin 2013). In 2013 and then again in 2014, LGBTI+ pride marches were partially experienced as an extension of *Gezi* when they unprecedentedly gathered thousands of people in the İstiklal Avenue even though Taksim Square and İstiklal Avenue were removed from the list of places for protest and assembly.

The authoritarianism of the AKP peaked in 2016 with the state of emergency that was declared after the failed coup attempt of 15 July. Many people fled the country to avoid incarceration; others left to pursue futures elsewhere, where they hoped to avoid social and political repression. Due to its secular character amid future anxiety, this migration has been called a *bunaltı göçü* – the migration of the suffocated (Ağır and Karıcı 2017). The communities that emerged in the aftermath of this migration in the cities of destination are occasionally referred to as the *Gezi Diaspora* because the ideals they espouse were assumed to be formed during the *Gezi* uprisings and because their feeling of suffocation was partially due to their experience of *Gezi* as a space of freedom and possibility, which now seems out of reach.⁴

Most of those who left Turkey during this wave of migration moved to European countries. Germany, particularly Berlin, was a primary destination due to the bonds with the already existing Turkish and Kurdish diasporas there. Germany has been a site of dispersal since it signed a the 'Recruitment and Procurement of Foreign Workers' treaty with Turkey in 1961 (Mandel 2008; Yurdakul 2009; Abadan-Unat 2011; Berger and Mohr 2010). Although economic pull factors played a role in early migration (and continue to today), Germany also became the main destination for political exiles after the military coup in 1980 and during the war that erupted between the Kurdistan's Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) and the Turkish Army in the 1990s. What makes the current migration distinct from the previous waves is that Turkey regards it as a brain drain. Compared with the labour migrants of the previous mass migration, 'it's the other side of the population now leaving in ever-greater numbers: the liberals, the intellectuals and the well-to-do' (Lowen 2017). These newcomers are argued to be 'the new face of the Turkish migrant' and their diasporic encounters are often associated with the phrase 'but you don't look like Turkish' (Türkmen 2019); they are seen, that is, as having a privileged life relative to previous waves of migrants, the majority of whom came from lower socio-economic backgrounds.⁵

However, privilege in this case is less clear cut: it intersects with marginality in the experience of new migrants, especially those in need of solidarity. To understand the ambiguity, consider the Academics for Peace, an association of 1128 academics who publicly condemned the violence committed by the Turkish Army in the Kurdish provinces in 2016. Many were subsequently accused of terrorism and dozens were dismissed, de-

tained or arrested. Those who landed in Germany belong to the high-skilled migrants, yet they mostly receive temporary and precarious positions supported by fellowships and networks, some of which such as the 'Adopt a Scholar' programme (Özdemir et.al 2019) are explicitly paternalistic. Their experiences exemplify how solidarity among unequals can take vertical forms, in the liberal projects that turn people into objects of pity (Partridge 2019).

Solidarity and privilege

The criticism and disappointment expressed by Turkey-based activists about the Berlin Walk implies a similar type of verticality. To those who are in need of support, it was perceived as a gesture of the privileged. Lara, a member of the Istanbul Pride Committee I interviewed, called the event a failure. 'It feels weird. It is like "Oh, you cannot walk in the Middle East, so we are walking in Europe for you". And that is unlovely. People do not feel like in solidarity then.' Three months after the walk, I was one of the speakers in the panel 'Nieder mit eurer Moral! Die LGBTI+ Bewegung und ihre Kampfstrategien' organised by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. I talked about the flourishing scene of diasporic queer activists and mentioned the Berlin Walk as an example. A Turkey-based audience member observed that it was not empowering to see that it was possible to walk happily and safely in Berlin while they were under police attack in Istanbul. 'Do we all have to move to Berlin to be able to enjoy the Pride now?' they asked. The question haunted me for days afterward. The unequal distribution of vulnerability across locations was palpable in the uncomfortable emotions and self-questioning of several *lubuns* based in Berlin. Throughout my observant participation and interviews, reconsideration of post-migrant vulnerability was a recurring theme among my interlocutors. Everyday life was mostly described as safer and easier for a queer person in Berlin than for one in Turkey. For instance, when asked about the situation for queers in Turkey, Evrim—a queer activist refugee from Turkey—refused to answer the question. He thought it should be answered by those who are still at risk living in Turkey. The experience of migration raised the question of whether *lubuns* can still 'have a say' in Turkey's queer movements while living in Berlin.

When the banner *Istanbul Pride* appeared in the middle of Berlin, it depicted the walk as a re-enactment of the Istanbul March. But the re-enactment missed taking an ethical stance: refusing to occupy the subject position of the ones who are at risk. It was perceived as an act of speaking on behalf of those who cannot in Turkey. Heartbreakingly, as Lara stated in the interview, it neglected the unequal vulnerability of the bodies in the two geographically distant events. Before I discuss the affective attachments of *lubuns* that blur this geographical distance, I take the heartbreak as a call to revisit the slogan 'No Borders for Queers!'. However, I want to shift the focus from the material differences between Istanbul and Berlin to the differences generated by the intricate realities of migration, ethnicity and sexuality in the German context. In that way, we can see that the slogan 'No Borders for Queers!' does not only risk concealing the material conditions that rendered walking possible in one location while making it a site of oppression in another. It also suggests an imaginary transnational queer community, which risks

concealing the situatedness of LGBT subjects. After all, borders exist not only between national territories but also between subject categories that are included, aligned and expelled differently by regulatory regimes in national and local contexts.

Borders and dispersal of pride

Annual pride parades that commemorate the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969 have undergone a process of normalisation of LGBT subjectivities developed under the hegemony of liberal paradigms of identity and visibility.⁶ Within this paradigm, coming-out and 'being proud' emerged as the normative indicators of the global 'gay' culture and politics, which led to the commodification and domestication of gay culture in mainstream Euro-American contexts (Manalansan 1995; Duggan 2002). Thus, annual pride parades went from being events that radically challenged the heterosexualisation of public spaces to opportunities for a neoliberal form of sexual citizenship like that epitomised by Berlin's Christopher Street Day.

The incorporation of LGBT politics into the liberal rights-based agendas of Western governments and institutions also played a crucial role in their regulation of borders and migration (El-Tayeb 2011; Haritaworn 2015). Jasbir Puar coined the term *homonationalism* to analyse the ways in which LGBT subjects achieve national belonging and consumer-citizenship at the expense of racialised others (2007). In explaining the racialisation of queerphobia in Western European contexts, scholars interrogated the invention of queer-friendliness as a Western value that generated white queer subjects worthy of protection at the expense of 'homophobic migrants' (Bacchetta et.al. 2015; Haritaworn 2008; Haritaworn et.al 2008). For instance, mainstream LGBT politics in Germany adhere to a notion of a 'hateful other' in the figure of the Muslim migrant. Turks and Arabs are singled out as people who embody 'Muslim homophobia' and the 'moral panic' around them leads to gendering and sexualising the debates surrounding integration (Yılmaz-Günay and Wolter 2013; Haritaworn 2015; Kosnick 2015).

Solidarity discourse occasionally masks the homo-colonial motivations of anti-migrant and anti-Muslim racism of mainstream LGBT groups and NGOs (Haritaworn 2008, 2012). The billboard campaign 'Love Deserves Respect' by LSVD was one contentious example in Berlin. Displayed mainly in migrant-populated districts such as Neukölln and Kreuzberg, the trilingual posters in German, Turkish and Arabic used in the campaign depicted same-sex-looking couples kissing. Aimed at Turkish and Arabic residents, the campaign ascribes homophobia to minority groups racialised as Muslim and marks certain districts of Berlin as homophobic and transphobic, which in turn plays a role in legitimising the gentrification of these districts (Kosnick 2015).

It is this context in which queer solidarity suggests itself as a slippery ground for queers of colour, for queer migrants and for queer diasporas constituted by uncomfortable emotions and the need to acknowledge and reflect on differences between them.

The Berlin solidarity walk did not only crystallise the unequal vulnerability of bodies in Istanbul and Berlin. It also embodied the ambivalent position of *lubuns* as racialised queer migrants at the intersection of privilege and marginalisation. Adopting an intersectional lens can, therefore, multiply the borders indicated in the slogan 'No Borders

for Queers!' Such a lens can also complicate the privilege ascribed to new migrants. In the example of *lubuns*, narratives of privilege resonate with the normative understanding of a queer migration expected to move from the location of oppression to the location of liberation (Luibhéid 2008; Manalansan 2006; Halberstam 2005; Fortier 2001). The flat itinerary of the queer migrant erases the racialised subject position of *lubuns* in the anti-migrant complicity of Germany's mainstream LGBT movements. The political implications of appearing on the streets of Berlin as a racialised queer can be understood only within this context.

14.2 Istanbul Pride Solidarity Demo, 2018, Hermannplatz, Berlin. Photograph by C. Suthorn / CC-BY-SA.05 / commons.wikimedia.org.



This liberation story, with its neatly bounded subjects and locations, overlooks the multilocality of the affective and political connectivities in migrant experience. Hence, in the next section I discuss the *restlessness* that emerged as 'the force of encounter' in migrant *lubun* belongings (Gregg and Seigworth 2010) and that sparked the organisation of the Berlin Solidarity Walk as a translocal act.

Berlin Walks with Istanbul Pride March

While waiting for a screening at the Berlin Kuir Fest 2018,⁷ a group of *lubuns*, including me, talked about the Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride March, which was scheduled to take place

in two weeks. Many questions, speculations, opinions and feelings flew around. Would it be possible to walk on İstiklal Avenue in Taksim this year? Would the Istanbul Pride Committee agree to use the 'legal' demonstration site in Bakırköy instead of Taksim, to which many political and historical meanings were attached? What about more police attacks? Most of us agreed that it was very difficult to stay home alone in Berlin that day. And that was when the idea to organise a Berlin walk to coincide with Istanbul Pride arose. Why not also walk along with those in Istanbul instead of following social media on tenterhooks? Everyone was thrilled. We would do the walk not merely for those in Istanbul, after all. It was also for us here in Berlin; otherwise we would spend an entire restless day jumping from one live stream to another. The restlessness that bonded us with 'there' was also bonding us together 'here'. It *messed up* the neat boundaries between locations and identities.⁸

Intersectionality was one of the concepts I pitched as a corrective to the flat accounts of queer migration, which define fixed locations of departure and arrival and associate them with certain values such as oppression and privilege. Some have pointed out how the term intersectionality has been re-appropriated by the neoliberal multiculturalist diversity politics of today's Europe (Bilge 2013) and have shown how, much like the language of diversity, the language of intersectionality has largely replaced intersectional analysis itself (Puar 2012, Cho et. al 2013). Cho, Crenshaw and McCall emphasise the potential of the term to foreground the 'social dynamics and relations that constitute subjects' rather than to reify identities (2013: 798). They suggest that relying on diversity and the inclusion of as many marginalised identity categories as possible may have limited transformative potential. (See Macdonald's chapter in this volume.)

This limitation was hinted at when the collective pronoun *We* posed itself as an impasse to the organising group *Kuir+Lubun Berlin*, which had made its first public appearance in the Solidarity Walk. Back then it was a newly formed group that had emerged out of the need to build a network of Turkish-speaking LGBTI+ new Berliners. Also present, though fewer in number, were older Berliners consisting of second- and third-generation queers with a migration history in their family.⁹ As one of the founding members, I experienced how the efforts of inclusivity troubled the group when defining the *We* in textual form. Whenever a Facebook description or an event call had to be written, the question 'Who are we?' required too many descriptions and keywords. Often, activists turned this question into a joke by articulating it with a particular intonation that signalled the difficulty of finding an answer—and sometimes to its dullness and pointlessness.

One year after the solidarity walk, the group came together to organise *Kuir+Lubun Berlin Pride March*. The aim was to highlight the 'local' experience and define *who* was walking. Juggling words such as *Türkiyeli* (being from Turkey), Turkish-speaking, migrant, people of colour and non-white in different combinations, the group held some tense discussions in its efforts to frame its intersectional perspective. Another identity category was added to the definition every other day; often we worried whether we could find an inclusive enough definition. This was not only because of the ballooning number of categories for describing sexual orientations and gender minorities, but also because of Berlin's 'migratory setting', which is 'thickened' by histories of migration from Turkey to Germany (Aydemir and Rotas 2008). As a consequence of this 60-year-long migration history, there were and remain different migrant subjectivities and experiences. After

long negotiations, the organisers of *Kuir+Lubun Berlin* adopted a long list of identities, which caused some confusion about the the walk's causes and allies. The event was perceived as a space for people of colour only. In the message group of the organisers, there was more than one question about whether 'whites' were also welcomed to the demonstration or not. The absurdly long list of identities had turned into one of those paralysing and dull moments that 'still and quell the perpetual motion' of assemblages (Puar 2012: 213). A year later, the restlessness that had motivated the solidarity walk was mired in questions of identity.

In arguing for the queer potential that lies in the restlessness that exceeded, or more precisely, troubled, the representational strategies of the activist group, I follow Puar's suggestion that intersectionality be re-read as an assemblage by taking power relations and situated subjectivities into consideration. Interrogating the solidarity walk as an assemblage that brings together multiple forces, matters, locations, temporalities, bodies and affects can map out its local, translocal and transnational implications. Such a perspective can identify the conflicting, ambivalent and unpredictable arrangements that can emerge and mess with the established accounts of identity, migration and activism. The Berlin solidarity walk, I argue, was a temporary assemblage that inhabited the restlessness of the transnational *lubun* bonds and provided solidarity for queers across borders. More precisely, the walk reclaimed and recontextualised the heritage of New York's Stonewall uprisings to protest against the conservative crackdown in Turkey. Moreover, it embodied an alternative pride march to the 'über-normalisation' of white gay visibility, company sponsorships and state institutions such as police forces and the German army (Çetin 2018).¹⁰

Restless solidarities

In her meditations on the queer diaspora, Anne-Marie Fortier suggests that the shift to diaspora away from ethnicity or nation marks a turning point in thinking about a community that is not defined by commonality, but, rather, by 'difference, dispersal, (dis)connection, diversity, and multilocality' (2002: 193). She defines a spacious terrain that brings queer conditions together with their multiplicities, contradictions, maybe even with their 'impossibilities', which Gopinath traces as a queer diasporic potential (2005).

Feeling restless on the day of the Istanbul Pride March was a diasporic affect that was shaped at once by attachment and movement (Ahmed 1999, Fortier 2002). Sharing the anxiety, fear and hope of those who are dispersed in Turkey had mobilised the groups in Berlin. It was not only their sense responsibility by way of vertical solidarity. It was also their emotional need to stand by those who share the attachment. The walk, therefore, was related to the idea of a shared home—a site of belonging, becoming and regrounding (Ahmed et.al 2003). But even though Turkey functioned as the geographical home of the organisers' restlessness, the walk included a wider range of 'community', one unified under the imaginary global community of queers encompassed by the heritage of *pride*. Hence, though sparked by *lubun* restlessness, the walk was also a queer solidarity performance that embodied another form of diaspora 'away from nation and ethnicity' (Fortier

2002). The Berlin walk was meant to raise a voice against the violent crackdown of the Turkish government but it also became a demand for a mythical transnational 'home', free of heterosexist violence.

The walk assembled a multitude of others and unchosen allies and founded a theretofore undefined *we*. It was unpredictable *who* else would join them in protest against the ban on Istanbul Pride. In a context where homonationalist LGBTI discourse was going mainstream, the unpredictability added to the uneasiness of solidarity. Butler contends that the political opening of solidarity emerges from such unpredictability rather than from deliberate agreements (2015), however. In this regard, she follows Muñoz's idea of the queer horizon's open 'not-yet' (2009).

Despite the uneasiness and the multiple attachments, bodies *aligned* with others 'against other others' in the moment of solidarity (Ahmed 2014: 28). An ephemeral community without identitarian shared values emerged in the plurality of those who walked. Solidarity had temporarily surmounted the impasse of the identity lists. The queer potential occurred in the togetherness of *walking*, which extended the diasporic spaciousness of the event to make room for difference, conflict and the unknown. In this example, solidarity took the form of intersectional queer politics, positioning the event against multiple regulatory regimes, local and transnational. Even though the discursive focus of the walk was Istanbul Pride and Turkey's crackdown on queer lives, taking to the streets in Berlin had political implications. The walk was a queer-of-colour take on *pride* that momentarily anchored a transnational political heritage in Berlin through a link to Istanbul.

Anti-fascist and queer-of-colour activism in Berlin have organised an alternative event as a political critique against the commercial and predominantly white Christopher Street Day (CSD) (Çetin 2018). The *Transgenialen Christopher Street Day* parade took place between 1997 and 2013 in the historically left and migrant space of Kreuzberg while the CSD parade was held in Mitte. The Berlin Solidarity Walk and TCSD followed similar urban strategies by appearing in historically left and migrant districts. But the timing of TCSD to coincide with CDS turned the event into a political critique against the mainstream parade.

By contrast, the simultaneity of the Solidarity Walk and Istanbul Pride was a crystallised moment in the simultaneity of migrant lives, which both stem from and foster transnational attachments (Levitt & Schiller 2004). A burgeoning scholarship on the digitally mediated co-presence of migrant lives (Diminescu 2008, Madianou and Miller 2012, Madianou 2016) and the 'emotional affordances' of digital media (Bareither 2019) have thrown light on the live streaming of new media technologies and the simultaneity of migrant lives. These real-time broadcasting captures many details 'on site' and thus amplifies the experience of 'thereness'. At the same time, the augmented thereness strengthens the sense of 'hereness' and intensifies the feeling of being 'away'. Diminescu contends that the immediacy of digital connectivity affords 'co-presence' across geographies and the experience of presence 'becomes less physical, less "topological" and more active and affective (Diminescu 2008: 572). I agree that digital affordances intensify affective transnational attachments, yet the geographical and physical role of presence and absence appears significant in my examination of cross-border queer solidarities. One of my interlocutors once described live streams to be 'like a gas pump', supplying a fuel he

could get only by going to Turkey. In short, live streams sharpen the co-presence of geographically distant lives as well as the restlessness of those who are 'away' but affectively and politically connected. That is why, in the chat that led to the planning of the Solidarity Walk, livestream was an uncomfortable topic, for it once again pointed to the ambivalence of a migrant experience shaped simultaneously by hereness and thereness.

My question is not whether restlessness can evolve into enduring political commitments. I argue, rather, that the Berlin Solidarity Walk was a moment that crystallised and collectivised the affective attachment of *lubuns*. The conflicting concepts—assembly and dispersal, privilege and marginalisation, attachment and movement, here and there—temporarily overlapped in the act of walking in solidarity with Istanbul Pride.

Concluding remarks

The restlessness that motivated the event *Berlin Walks with Istanbul Pride March* is confined neither to the *lubun* scene nor the diasporic community. People can feel restless, anxious, tense, antsy and fidgety whenever they mobilise politically. In that sense, the restlessness I described here is not very different from the force that mobilised the masses during the Gezi uprising in 2013. I have nevertheless argued for the particularity of this restlessness by exploring what it *did* in the context of the Berlin Solidarity Walk. Merging the local, translocal and transnational dynamics, the Walk signified the tensions and entanglements of LGBT politics across borders and the difficult politics of solidarity across differences. I was intrigued by the critiques that regarded the walk as a *failure* because it neglected the differences in the material conditions and physical vulnerability between Istanbul and Berlin.

I suggested that restlessness could explain the 'failed' recognition of material differences across Istanbul and Berlin and argued that the affective entanglements of *here* and *there* in the migrant experiences made reflective forms of solidarity difficult. But restlessness also reflected the queer potential for cross-border solidarity, located as it was at the site of belonging rather than identity. In this sense, the walk can be read as a reflexive outcome of a restlessness that resists description in the language of identity yet nevertheless embodies the moment of solidarity.

Difference and dispersal—the constitutive elements of queer (Warner 1991) and diasporic (Clifford 1994, Fortier 2002) collectivities—render the ground of solidarity uneasy, not only in the relationships between diasporas and 'home', but also where LGBT politics are complicit in nationalist anti-migrant discourses. This uneasiness can also be productive insofar as it encourages us to reflect on solidarity practices, which when built on dialogue, criticism and accountability can be an important part of a political project (Dean 1998). Committing to the slogan 'No borders for queers!' in a world where borders make material and affective differences in our lives requires recognition and constant negotiation around those differences. It is important that activists espouse this uneasy slogan as they work to acknowledge the power imbalances and the situatedness of slogans, actions and people and to redraw the borders of activism, commonality and belonging. After all, as Lesbians and Gays Support Migrants organisation poignantly reminds us, 'Solidarity is not an intention; it is an action, and it must keep being done'.¹¹

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Notes

- 1 Throughout the paper, I use LGBTI+ to refer to the (queer) movement(s) in Turkey. It is the abbreviation most Turkey-based groups use.
- 2 Lubunca is a slang developed and used by queer circles in Turkey. Although it was historically used by mainly gay men and trans women to disguise the content of their conversations in public, the slang gradually became popular in various LGBTI+ circles. For more, see Nicholas Kontovas's unpublished dissertation *Lubunca: The Historical Development of İstanbul's Queer Slang and A Social-Functional Approach to Diachronic Processes in Language*. In the diasporic context of Berlin, the word *lubun* was reappropriated to signify the intersectional subject position of someone who is queer and from Turkey or has a bond with Turkey. Throughout the paper, I occasionally use it to refer to my research participants.
- 3 *Ayol* is a colloquial expression in Turkish associated with an effeminate way of talking.
- 4 For more on the dynamics and narratives of the recent wave of migration, see 'Affective Digital Media of New Migration from Turkey: Feelings, Affinities, and Politics' (Savaş 2019), 'Bu Ülkeden Gitmek: Yeni Türkiye'nin Göç İklimini Buradakiler ve Oradakiler Anlatıyor' (Kazaz & Mavituna 2018); 'Yeni Ülke Yeni Hayat' (Çuhadar 2019); and 'Gezi Generation' Fleeing Turkey' (Gürsel 2018).
- 5 The term 'new wave' has been employed by media outlets and by some migrants themselves. For instance, it appears in the name of a Facebook group 'New Wave in Berlin', which has over 3,000 members. This video by Deutsche Welle also uses the term: <https://www.dw.com/tr/almanyany%C4%B1n-yeni-dalgag%C3%B6%C3%A7menleri/av-52244931> (accessed 14 March 2022).
- 6 The mainstream histories about the 1969 *Stonewall* riots have systematically white-washed events over the course of decades by erasing the role of Black and Latinx trans women in the three-day long resistance against the police and by presenting the heroic subject to be a white cis gay man. For more on the intersectional roots of queer politics, see Roderick A. Ferguson's 'One Dimensional Queer' (2018).
- 7 The first and only queer film festival *Pembe Hayat KuirFest* was banned in Turkey as part of the city-wide ban on all LGBTI+ events. *Kuir Fest Berlin* took place in Berlin in 2018 and in 2019 as part of the growing transnational solidarity in response to the ban, as the festival director stated in an interview (Clements 2019). See <http://daddy.land/stories/crushin-on-kuirfest> (accessed 14 March 2022).

- 8 Martin Manalansan theorises mess as constitutive of queerness and queer immigrants. He regards mess as ‘a productive orientation toward bodies, objects, and ideas that do not toe the line of hygiene, “practicality” or functionality, value, and proper space/time coordination’ (2014: 98).
- 9 For the sake of clarity, I use the term generation even though it predominantly connotes a heterosexual family lineage and national belonging that exclude queer kin-making practices. For a detailed account of queer time, which is argued to be ‘out of sync’ with linear time frames, see Halberstam (2005).
- 10 Christopher Street in New York is where the Stonewall Inn is located. Berlin’s Christopher Street Day has taken place since 1979. In 2010, the organisers of the event announced that they would bestow Judith Butler with a civil courage award for her work. But she rejected the award. Instead, she called out the ‘racist complicity’ of the host organisations and offered the prize to local organisations for queers of colour.
- 11 Retrieved from <https://era-magazine.com/2020/07/21/queer-solidarity-smashes-borders-a-history-of-lgbt-solidarity-activism/>

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