

**ONUR:**

**'EMOTIONAL HABITUS' OF LGBTI ACTIVISM IN TURKEY**

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Keywords: LGBTI, Social Movement, Activism, Emotions, Habitus

This thesis focuses on the generation of emotions around Pride activism in Turkey. Based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with people who have been part of LGBTI activism in Turkey, this study investigates how feelings and emotions are becoming sites of political activism and how they generate discourses of equality, justice and humaneness that enables political participation and activism. What is ‘emotional habitus’? What does “pride” refer to in the context of LGBTI activism historically? How is it emotionally charged through political activism? In the local context, what is the difference between “pride” and *onur*? What kind of emotions Pride Parades invokes in people participating in the organization of this event? How does Pride activism transform feelings such as shame, fear, anxiety, loneliness and vulnerability into anger, motivation, courage, joy, enthusiasm, solidarity and empowerment? How are these altered through the changing social political and economic conjuncture of Turkey? Are there any challenges to these emotional practices? Posing these questions, among others, this research examines Deborah Gould’s conceptualization of “emotional habitus” in terms of the ‘ambivalent’ feelings and emotions attributed to being LGBTI in the context of heteronormative sociality and argues that the ambivalence created by the simultaneous existence of “conflicting” feelings can bolster political action and confrontational activism. Pride Weeks and Parades as a site to investigate relations between emotions and political activism, has been a focal point because they constitute the most visible physical outcome of the workings of emotions with activism, because of their associations to various forms of emotional states starting with pride itself. This study aims to articulate a new perspective to the LGBTI studies and literature in Turkey in its early stages by discussing the possibilities and openings that the concept “emotional habitus” can provide to the formation of political action.

## ÖZET

### ONUR:

## TÜRKİYE’DE LGBTİ AKTİVİZMİNİN ‘DUYGUSAL HABİTUSU’

Serkan İlaslaner

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Anahtar sözcükler: LGBTİ, Sosyal Hareketler, Aktivizm, Duygular, Habitus

Bu tez Türkiye’deki Onur Haftası aktivizmi çerçevesinde oluşan duygulara odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’deki LGBTİ aktivizminin parçası olan insanlarla yapılan derinlemesine ve yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanarak; siyasi aktivizmin nasıl bir duygulanım alanı olduğunu araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu duyguların siyasi katılıma ve aktivizme olanak veren eşitlik, adalet ve insanlık söylemlerini nasıl oluşturduğuna bakmaktadır. “Duygusal habitus” nedir? “Pride” (gurur) uluslararası LGBTİ aktivizmi bağlamında tarihsel olarak neye işaret etmektedir? “Pride”ın siyasi aktivizm yoluyla ne gibi duygusal yüklenimleri vardır? Yerel bağlamda “pride” ve *onur* arasındaki fark nedir? Onur Yürüyüşleri, organizasyonunda çalışan insanlarda ne gibi duygular ortaya çıkartıyor? Onur Haftası aktivizmi utanç, korku, kaygı, yalnızlık ve kırılanlık gibi duyguları nasıl kızgınlık, motivasyon, cesaret, neşe, heves, dayanışma ve güçlenme gibi duygulara dönüştürmektedir? Bu duygular Türkiye’nin değişen sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik gündemi içerisinde nasıl farklılaşmaktadır? Bu duygusal pratiklere karşı ne gibi durumlar ortaya çıkmaktadır? Bu ve benzeri sorular minvalinde, bu araştırma Deborah Gould’un kavramsallaştırdığı “duygusal habitus”u incelemektedir. Buradan yola çıkarak heteronormatif toplumsallığın LGBTİ’lere atfettiği çelişen duygu ve hislerin, siyasi hareket ve bu toplumsallığa karşı gelen aktivizmi nasıl desteklediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Onur Haftaları ve Yürüyüşleri duygular ve siyasi aktivizmin arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek adına odak noktası olarak alınmıştır; çünkü bu etkinlikler duygular ve bu duygular yoluyla oluşan siyasi aktivizmin en belirgin fiziksel sonucunu oluşturmaktadır. Diğer bir neden ise “pride” ve *onur*’un konvansiyonel olarak birer duygulanım belirtmesidir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma Türkiye’de henüz yeni gelişmekte olan LGBTİ çalışmaları ve literatürüne; “duygusal habitus”un siyasi hareket oluşumunu anlamakta sağlayabileceği açılımlar ve olasılıkları tartışarak yeni bir perspektif katmayı amaçlamaktadır.

*To those who believe in a future, a future where being is possible*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“To exist”

“Because my name is Onur”

“For equality”

“Because I am not ‘the other’ I am like anyone else”

“Because we create a space to express ourselves”

“Freedom, solidarity, resistance, love...”

“Hahaha... It means this (the laughter) my dear”

“To see how many we are despite the fact that we are lonely in our individual lives”<sup>1</sup>

“Feelings and emotions are fundamental to political life (...) in the sense that there is an affective dimension to the processes and practices that make up ‘the political’” (Gould, 2009:3) says Deborah Gould in her book ‘Moving Politics’ which has opened up new horizons for studying LGBTI activism. It can be argued that it is inevitable for LGBTI politics to be built upon feelings and emotions. It is about our bodies, the emotions we are thrown into such as shame, fear, loneliness and vulnerability, and about the feelings we have developed like anger, solidarity, joy and love. It is about the connectedness of bodies that are passing by, about alienation to the comfort zones of heteronormativity (Ahmed, 2004:148)

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<sup>1</sup> These are some of the answer people give to “Why are you here? What does onur mean to you? in a street interview conducted by T24 News in 2014 Pride Parade. To see the video: <http://t24.com.tr/video/lgbtinin-istiklal-yuruyusu-resim-gibi-gectiler-taksimden,271>

and about the social impediments for mourning (Butler, 2004). Therefore, this thesis aims to trace and find out the emotional dimensions of building LGBTI activism in Turkey.

Throughout this research I have observed and listened to various feelings which the research participants have related with LGBTI politics however the scope of this research being limited, I chose to focus on a particular form of activism in Turkey that is Pride activism. In framing my research, based upon semi-structured, in depth interviews with 9 participants and as a participant in Pride Parades for the last 7 years, I planned to conceptualize the relationship between emotions and political activism. In the background of my choice to work in this field are my own history of participating in LGBTI activist practices during my undergraduate years after “coming out” as well as the drastic growth in the visibility and the political impact of LGBTI politics in Turkey in recent year. My initial questions focused on what it means to be an activist, how people become activists and what motivates them. Activism as a focal point of analysis, I argue, is very critical to understanding the progress of the movement. Though, this progress cannot be understood without considering activism, both as a personal and a collective processes that generate various emotions surrounding contentious politics and group formation. To do this, it is important to document oral narratives of activism in order to trace the emotional dimension of the development of Pride activism in Turkey. This study is about feelings and emotions that are traced within the narratives of the participants, invoked by the solidarity and political contention as well as social political violence and oppression on LGBTI people in Turkey.

More specifically, this thesis scrutinizes the simultaneous working of the emotions that would otherwise be conflicting or become each other’s anti-theses such as pride and shame, loneliness along with collectivity as well as fear and motivation within LGBTI Pride activism through Deborah Gould’s analysis of ‘emotional habitus’. What kind of emotions are socially and discursively associated with LGBTI people? And in turn, what kind of emotions do LGBTI people associate with themselves, especially in the context of expanding LGBTI activism in Turkey? What is this thing that we call “LGBTI Pride”? And how has it been emotionally charged in the context of political activism during parades on İstiklal Street? What kind of feelings does Pride activism invoke in people participating in the organization of this event? How does Pride activism (and LGBTI activism in general) transform feelings

such as shame, fear, anxiety, loneliness and vulnerability into anger, motivation, courage, joy, enthusiasm, solidarity and empowerment? What kind of political openings do the ambivalent states of simultaneously existing feelings such as shame and fear and motivation create? What kind of political practices are performed to have this simultaneity or are there any emotions transformed into something other? How are these emotions altered through the changing social, political and economic conjuncture of Turkey? Departing from Gould's analysis, I argue that the feelings which she claims form an "ambivalence" for LGBTI's are better conceptualized as sources for one another for articulation and politicization. In other words, these can be conceptualized as feelings without which the other cannot exist or without which the other cannot be a source of politicization. Hence, this thesis argues that "emotional habitus", which basically defines the "socially constituted ways of feeling" constitutes an emotional resource for Pride activism.

### **1.1. A Brief Overview of The History of LGBTI Movement and Pride Activism in Turkey**

Throughout the 70's and 80's identity politics gained momentum in Turkey, which resulted in the politicization of gender, sexuality, ethnicity as well as class issues. Yet, LGBTI identity remained relatively unpoliticized except for the open suppression of LGBTI public expressions under the military regime, such as the prohibition of transsexuals to pursue stage performances (singing, dancing etc.) due to "public morality". The first significant act in the history of Turkish Republic, concerning the development of the political activism around queer identities, is the establishment of Radical Democrat Green Party under the leadership of Ibrahim Eren in 1985. The party's political agenda addressed a wide range of political activism such as feminism, ecology, LGBT issues, anti-militarism and atheism (ILGA 2004, Duru 2002). Although the party remained small and marginal through the late 1980's, their inclusion of the LGBT terms and politics was significant for visibility and politicization. Although ineffective in terms of mainstream politics, Radical Democrat Green Party had been the first step in terms of LGBT groups gaining a political voice and went ahead with protests, hunger strikes (as in 1987 by a group of transsexuals against the harassment and torture) and other public events that raised LGBT concerns.

Some of the crucial early developments were the acquisition of the legal status for transsexuals in 1988, and after the prohibition of the first Pride Week and Pride Parade in 1993, Lambdaİstanbul was founded in 1993 (ILGA 2004). One year later in 1994 Kaos GL both as a LGBT organization and as a magazine had been established in Ankara. After the establishment of these groups a series of meetings and gatherings took place in Istanbul and Ankara twice a year called “Türkiyeli Eşcinseller Buluşması – Güzİstanbul and BaharAnkara”<sup>2</sup>. Throughout the 1990’s the student forums such as LEGATO, radio shows (Açık Radyo), various magazines and periodical publishing began to sprout due to the momentum the LGBT Movement gained. However state violence, suppression and discrimination against the new visibility of LGBTI community also increased. In 1996, Lambda İstanbul joined to UN Habitat II (United Nations Human Settlement Program) conference held in Istanbul and brought the issue of violence against LGBT people in Turkey to the international audience and a protest was organized in Ulker Sokak (Selek, 2011). This was particularly the case towards transsexual individuals in Ulker Sokak as many of them were displaced and driven out of their homes, subjected to systematic arrests, investigations, mobbing, police raids, public harassment and torture (such as raids organized by Hortum Suleyman – the head of the police department in Beyoğlu district) (Selek, 2011; Çalışkan, 2014).

In the 2000’s, the movement was relatively more spread and active in terms of protests, demonstrations, gatherings and establishment of new groups in other cities; and in terms of engaging in other political groups such as feminists and socialists. Despite the conflict and the tension of a first time encounter with LGBTI political identity of these other groups, a group of activists from Lambdaİstanbul and Kaos GL joined the May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations in 2001. Meanwhile the annual gatherings were continuing under the name of “*Onur Haftası*” (Pride Week) and for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these events, in 2003, a group of activists, around 50, marched on İstiklal Street with anti-discrimination and anti-violence slogans and banners. This was the first Pride Parade in Istanbul organized after the prohibition of the one in 1993, which would later become a major political demonstration of LGBTI Movement in Turkey. Although the Pride Week’s had continued throughout 1990’s and early 2000’s, the 2003

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<sup>2</sup> “Gathering of Homosexuals from Turkey – Fall İstanbul and Spring Ankara”

Pride Parade was significantly more dynamic, as a result of the increased political activism and established affinities with feminist, anarchist and socialist movements. These affinities has indicated themselves especially in the first parade in 2003 through raising voice against the US invasion of Iraq and Turkey's military policies. In 2005, LGBTI activists (lesbians) started to join March 8<sup>th</sup> demonstrations, claiming their space within feminist movement in Turkey. The participation in Pride Weeks and Parades increased gradually throughout 2000's voicing and protesting this violent conjuncture. In 2007, after the court case against the closure case of Lambdaİstanbul, as the activists I have interviewed with have indicated, the Pride Parade became a protest with massive participation. Inclusion of the big rainbow flag, forming a separate trans-organizational committee for Pride Weeks due to the formation of various different LGBTI organizations, making these committees open for anyone, the increasing visibility of both different sexual orientations and gender identities along with the increasing visibility of violence, efforts for political participation in the representative politics have an important impact on this gradual increase in the participation. Meanwhile, since 2009, Trans Pride Weeks have been organized, mostly by transgendered activists, to raise a focused attention to transphobia and violence against transgendered people. More recently, in 2013, after Gezi Parkı resistance and protests all around Turkey, as a result of intense encounters and established solidarity with other oppositional groups, an estimated number of fifty thousand people (not only LGBTIs) marched on İstiklal Street carrying rainbow flags in solidarity with the LGBTI Movement in Turkey, marking the biggest Pride Parade in in the 25 years history of LGBTI Movement in Turkey.

Throughout this relatively short history of LGBTI activism in Turkey, the literature on LGBTI issues has also emerged and developed. It can be argued that, from its early stages the movement became a site of knowledge production. However, it is only since the 2000s that we are witnessing the creation of a body of literature on LGBTI issues in Turkey. Between 1985 and 2000, most of the literature revolved around identity politics, the politics of naming different sexual orientations and identifications, and violence against LGBTI people (e.g. Yüzgün, 1986, 1993; Kaos GL Issues between 1993 and 2000; Çekirge, 1991). Since the beginning of the 2000s, the literature has greatly diversified, both politically and theoretically (e.g. Selek, 2001; Özbay and Soydan, 2003; Berghan, 2006). The last decade has also seen a growing interest in Queer Theory and the acclamation of Queer as a political

stance (e.g. Mutluer, 2008; Cogito, 2011; Delice and Çakırlar, 2012; Şeker, 2013) along with the confusion and conflicts<sup>3</sup>. Although emotions and emotional tolls of being LGBTI or political activism were referred within these works, they were not taken as fields of analysis per se.

Although *Onur Haftası*/ Pride Weeks have been organized in Turkey since 1993 and the parades since 2003, until the second half of the 2000's, the concept of “*onur*” has not been conceptualized within LGBTI activism and studies in Turkey. It is possible to see attempts to define it as a political discourse of LGBTI activism in the 2007 Pride Week's brochure due to the debates between Kaos GL and Lambdaİstanbul over the normative connotations of *Onur*. However, a thorough examination of *Onur* as a political concept has not been on the agenda of LGBTI politics and literature. This study, therefore, is also an attempt to analyze and contextualize the meanings of *Onur* within LGBTI activism in Turkey.

## 1.2. Method

In order to investigate the emotional dimension of Pride activism, I have conducted nine, in person, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with activists who have been involved in Pride activism at some point in its relatively short history. Three of them took place in various cafes in Taksim and Kadıköy, two of them were through Skype sessions and the rest were conducted in the residences of my participants. I mostly interviewed people who are from

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<sup>3</sup> The main discussion between the academics and activists has been on the mis-conceptualization of queer. Through the 20 years of the LGBTI movement, these letters have been regarded as a political stance, becoming a major point of struggle for people with different sexual orientations and gender identities. Definitions and categorizations have become a strategic tool for political strategies against social exclusion as well as the self-understanding and personal development in terms of sexuality. Yet the use of these identity categories also invoked the issue of normativity and “queer” came to be used to problematize the various attributions to sexualities. In other words queer became a very useful term for de-identification, as well as for a politics of the non-categorical, those who do not fit to any letter of LGBTI movement. However, there emerged a tendency of adding Q to the LGBTI which initiated a discussion around the use of “queer” as an identity category, especially given that it is theoretically based on a denunciation of identity categories. One major criticism of the introduction of queer has been that it signals an undermining of 20 years of struggle that is based on acclaiming the categories ‘LGBTI’. (Partog, 2011).

İstanbul besides one from Ankara and another one from the USA. Additionally, due to the time frame of the fieldwork I could not interview activists from other cities who have recently begun organizing their own Pride Parades, hence this study will be mostly about the Pride Parade in İstanbul and the activism around it. To conduct the interviews I reached the interviewees through personal acquaintances and contacts in a snowball fashion. The fieldwork took almost two months due to the responses and availabilities of my interviewees. Moreover, I explored emotions among those who are considered as activists and transmitted to the larger community through various sources (e.g. publications, manifestos, and call for protests, events and meetings, workshops etc.). However, the snowball technique I used to find research participants, have created limitations for the analysis of emotions. For instance, the emotions such as motivation, courage, joy and feelings of safety and solidarity related to the participants' socialization processes through political activism might only be limited to those who could sustain those relations of socialization. Therefore, making a general assumption over the emotional dimension of LGBTI activism through the stories of the research participants would create a bias. What about those who could not sustain the relations of socialization? Who are those that were included and those who are excluded from this activist environment? What are the features of this environment? The nine participants of this research are those who more or less, were socialized and worked within the same political group, those who know each other and friends with each other; hence representing only a small part of the activist groups in Turkey. As a limitation of snowball technique, the analysis of "emotional habitus" can only represent their activist networks accordingly. That's why, I consider this study as a preliminary work on the relationship of emotions and LGBTI activism in Turkey.

### **1.2.1. Positionality**

Halberstam argues that "To begin an ethnographic project with a goal, with an object of research and a set of presumptions is already to stymie the process of discovery; it blocks one's ability to learn something that exceeds the frameworks which one enters...Conversation rather than mastery indeed seems to one very concrete way of being in relation to another form of being and knowing without seeking to measure that life modality

by the standard that are external to it (2011:12).” Hence to balance the emic and etic point of view in the present ethnographical analysis I tried to design a study enabled the research participants to alter, design and direct the process of my writing, in an effort to establish a reciprocal relationship between academic and activist practices. Off record, after the interviews I had enormous help and advice from most of the participants who were genuinely enthusiastic about my research. Many participants indicated their tense relationship with academia and expressed concerns about the ways in which academic works objectified the LGBTIs. They also discussed what the LGBTI organizations were doing or could do in order to prevent such objectification.

Therefore, working on LGBTI issues have never been comfort zone for me. Through the process of framing my research, deciding on the field questions and tackling how to approach to the topic and the field; I was anxious about the presumed tension between academia and LGBTI activism. For instance, in the “Queer, Turkey and Transsexual Identity” conference held in Boğaziçi University in 2010, where I was also a participant, strong criticism was voiced against academics working on gender and sexuality. It was suggested by a few participants that academic interest over the subjects related to sexuality and gender is a manifestation of the power relationships between academia and activism. Initially, I did not find these criticisms against academia too unfair because of the attitudes of the researchers towards LGBTI communities. These attitudes, participants mentioned during the conference were mostly resulted in the instrumentalization of LGBTI’s to purport some argument in a thesis or a book, whereas the agency and the voice of the LGBTI’s were non-existent. The objectification of LGBTI identities were thus the stemming point of these criticisms. So, in light of these, I asked myself if it is possible to be both an academic and activist. What is the difference of an academic researching and writing on issues of being LGBTI in Turkey than the activist working in this field? These were some of the difficult questions I kept asking myself as I pursued this research.

As an extension of the tension that I discussed between academia and activism, throughout my fieldwork I found myself in a position where I continuously tried to negotiate my position as a researcher vis-à-vis my participants and during my participant observation. Based on my conference experience in 2010, I was anxious about interviewing activists. It was with this

anxiety that I started my fieldwork, emailing activists for interviews. I first turned to acquaintances to reach my research participants. After I met with Yeşim and Cihan, they became my gatekeepers and through their suggestions and introductions, I was able to reach other activists as well as accessing the fields where I could do participant observation. Within this process of finding participants for my research I realized that those who were relatively new within LGBTI politics were replying to my e-mails and Facebook messages with less enthusiasm and sometimes not even replying. There might be personal reasons for some of these responses, but subsequent conversations with my research participants also alerted me to the risks of disappointing research participants. One of the participants, for instance, complained about the increasing number of academic research and theses done on sexuality and LGBTI issues and yet very few researchers sharing the results of their research with their research participants. Overall, having experienced this tension first hand, I had to negotiate my positionality during my fieldwork both with the participants and with my own self-perceptions and anxieties.

### **1.3. Theoretical Framework**

The present study attempts to create a theoretical framework in which it is possible to speak about emotions in relation to LGBTI activism in Turkey. My original intention for this thesis was to trace the affective dimensions of LGBTI activism however, through the field process I have realized the difficulties of carrying out a retrospective affect research, based on memories and testimonies. In the course of the interviews, what the participants were telling me and the theoretical framework was not complying with each other. I was not able to trace what goes unarticulated but rather hearing the conscious articulation and political interpretation of emotional states related to activism and Pride Parades. Therefore I believe it is crucial to set a differentiation between emotions and affect.

The social constructionist approach to social movements have rendered emotions and feelings in conscious terms (Gould, 2009:19; Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2001) however this approach to feelings in a social movement environment lacks what goes unconscious, non-cognitive and non-linguistic. Gregg and Seigworth, by naming it as a force, define affect as “an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation

as well as the passage of forces and intensities...Affect is the name we give to the forces that can serve to drive us toward movement...or that can leave us overwhelmed by the world's intractability" (2010:1).

There is a subtle and ambiguous distinction between affect and emotion when this 'movement' is considered within the social movement context. Often, the ambiguity lingers around the questions on whether affect is a mode of connecting to other humans as a result of the circulations of emotions such as hate, anger, love, passion, fear, anxiety and so on; or whether it is the impression of this circulation left on us and how we react to them. Massumi (1995) conceptualizes affect as an intensity of both the ability to affect and be affected by what we linguistically name them as emotions. So for him emotions are only representing the surface of the affects, a conscious expression of what goes underneath consciousness. Others, mainly psychologists, define affect as the experience of feelings and emotions (Hogg & Abrams & Martin 2010). Additionally, Sedgwick argues that affects can reside in anything, including people, ideas, sensations, relations, materials, ideas, institutions and so on (2003: 19). Despite the difficulty of situating affect within LGBTI activism in my research, if we take LGBTI Movement as an emotional domain, the articulated emotions, (people's experiences of fear, anger, anxiety, and shame) become the tools for forming action. So affect is only partly represented through emotions and for the present research I came to realize that to focus on the affectivity of a social movement environment, doing research on it requires extensive participant observation, and long term presence within the practices and events. However, the interviews I conducted have revealed emotions as critical components of political activism, and have led me to argue that emotions are the inseparable resources and outcomes of political action. Mary Bernstein defines activism as a way to translate feelings like shame, fear, and isolation into anger, solidarity, pride and action (Bernstein 2005:61). Through this translation they not only reside in individual consciousness but also gain a political momentum which drives the activism. This analysis of individuality or collectivity of feelings and emotions, I suggest, is crucial to understand the stemming point of activism and the affective relations of activist politics.

Research show that emotions play a key role in mobilizing people when they are realized within a social movement (Durkheim 1966-1976, Ahmed 2004-2010 and Bernstein 2005).

In his analysis of emotions Durkheim argues that “great movements” of feeling “do not originate in any one of the particular individual consciousness” (Durkheim 1966:4), this force must also penetrate us and organize itself within us; it thus becomes an integral part of our being and by the way that very fact this is elevated and magnified” (Durkheim 1976:209)” so people do not get mobilized merely because they feel in certain ways as individuals but how feelings circulate among them and bring them together. In a more general framework, Sara Ahmed (2004) discusses that we “feel our way” through the functioning of emotions as a world making process, “feminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions matter for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds. So in a way, we do ‘feel our way’” (Ahmed, 2014:12). The translation of feelings into political statements might, thus, be a start for becoming an activist through expressing how people feel their way of existing in this world, their social and political subjectivities and what these conditions allow them to be and how to alter these conditions through either the conflict between “feelings” and “our ways” or compliance of these “feelings” and “our ways”.

Accordingly, if moral codes of a society is the defining mechanism of one’s emotional habitus, how does re-structuring occur in a social movement? What are the emotional capitals of the activists in general and what kind of structures of feeling (Williams, 1977) do Pride Parades purport? Therefore researching the emotional dimensions of a form of political activism that is Pride activism, turns out to be useful to analyze and make meanings of situations that enable individuals to pursue politics of coming-out or politics of recognition vis-à-vis socially enforced, all-encompassing heteronormativity. Goodwin on this issue of the undermining of the importance of feelings, states that the “mobilizing structures, frames and resources, collective identity and political opportunities” (2001: 6) are very much intrinsic to the emotional structures of the people in a social movement.

#### **1.4. Thesis Outline**

The next chapter is an inquiry towards the meanings of pride and *onur*. I try to establish a conceptualization of what pride means for LGBTI politics in general and how it has resonated itself as *onur* in Turkey. Within this analysis, I aim to historicize and contextualize the

production of a particular form of LGBTI activism around concepts that are intrinsically related to feelings and emotion. My participants' narratives of the history of Pride activism along with their commentaries on the issues and developments they have experienced has led me to draw a differentiation between the local practices of what's known as Pride activism in the international arena through signifying it as *onur*. By doing this, it became easier to see the connotations of what is first to be told as just a translation of pride into Turkish and to historicize the development of Pride activism in Turkey.

In the third chapter, my goal is to delve into the emotional dimensions of Pride activism. I analyze how the negative emotions such as shame, fear, and anxiety have paved the way for political expression of social and political oppression in a protesting manner. In this chapter, I focus on the emotions that are narrated by my research participants such as fear and the feelings of "making oneself exist" along with the sentiments that being crowded generates such as strength and success. As for the last remark of the chapter I tried to conceptualize how the uneasy feelings my research participants have against the notion of *onur*. This section specifically refers to the ongoing debate of the "assimilative qualities" of pride vis-à-vis path breaking accounts of purporting *shame* as a political stance.

## CHAPTER 2:

### *ONUR AND PRIDE*

“Secreted and closeted people were coming out. There were newspaper clippings attached to the boxes, news that are disparaging us. And we tore them off. “These closets are not our destiny, homosexuals come out!” says in the press statement you know...”<sup>4</sup>

“This was the only thing in our heads” says Yeşim, talking about the 2004 Pride Parade. Although the events were called Pride Week and Pride Parade, the political conceptualization of ‘pride’ was not yet debated over. Coming out and becoming visible was the political agenda of the second Pride Parade. Consisted of at most twenty people, the press statement was calling homosexuals<sup>5</sup> to come out of their closets. Wearing big refrigerator boxes with newspaper clippings attached to them, they were trying to exhibit the conditions that LGBTI people were forced into and trying to encourage people to come out by taking those boxes off and putting them aside. This performative exhibition, perhaps, was the clearest and

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<sup>4</sup> “Gizlenmiş saklanmış insanlar dışarı çıkıyordu. Gizlenen dolapların dışında haberler vardı, bizi kötüleyen haberler. Ve biz de bunu yırtıp attık, çıkardık üstümüzden. ‘Bu dolaplar kader değil, eşcinseller açılın!’ diyor ya hani basın metni...”

<sup>5</sup> Eşcinsel (homosexual) was used for naming the movement through 1990’s and the early 2000’s. Through the course of development of the movement in Turkey it was changed as first LGBT then LGBTT and lastly after Gezi Park resistance, LGBTI was started to be used for the movement. For further information see:

simplest form of an emotional transformation of people with non-normative sexual and gender identities.

In this chapter, I conceptualize the notion of *onur* within the contours of LGBTI activism in Turkey. Through the interviews *onur* has come to define a political discourse of LGBTI activism in Turkey. As I have mentioned earlier, *onur*, in time, considered a language and naming of the discourses such as humaneness, equality, justice and visibility rather than being related to sorts of sentiments about being LGBTI. Through providing an introductory comparison between the developments of pride as a political statement of LGBTI activism internationally and locally; I will situate the formation of *onur* as a concept over which the LGBTI movement in Turkey organizes one of its biggest political events. This chapter is mainly formed around the questions regarding the development of the notion of Pride as a particular form of activism and a discursive tool for LGBTI politics in Turkey. What is this thing we call LGBTI Pride? How is *onur* different from pride? What are the political discourses of Pride within its international historicity and *onur* in its local development?

### **2.1. “It is just a translation” – Translating Pride into *Onur***

“This is just a translation” says Sinan, trying to channel my question ‘What is *onur*?’ to what Pride activism does rather than what pride means. Instead of taking the practice of naming a globally spread form of activism as “just a translation”, I would rather take it as a practice of meaning making and altering the universality of LGBTI activism in a local context. Translation in the context of Pride activism does not appeal to me as just a medium of transferring meanings from one language into another. It is a form of politics that is sensitive to the local history of a political movement and its objectives. Butler argues that the practices of translation is related to how people are making meaning for/in their lives as a response to the cultural impositions of dominant societies (Butler, 2003:48). Her conceptualization of “cultural translation”, thus, is a very useful term to analyze and understand the political development of *onur* in the context of LGBTI politics in Turkey. According to Butler, cultural translation is a democratic practice of altering and reframing the universal which creates a space for the reconfiguration of the universal political actions and which

demonstrates the limits of “universal” political idioms (2003: 50). Therefore, I can argue that *onur* is the rearticulation of “pride” that is constituted as the universal. It is not just the rearticulation of “pride” into another language but also rearticulation of the ways people organize politically and make political claims.

Before going into the development of the political practices of Pride activism through focusing on the formation of its discursive nuances internationally and locally, let us take a moment to situate the terms *onur* and pride. Up to this point it might seem that Pride and *onur* are used interchangeably or synonymously. The uses of these terms are not random but rather a political choice. I will be using “Pride activism” throughout the thesis to define and exhibit its historical development and emotional dimensions, however, the local naming of a globally spread form of a particular LGBTI activism as “*Onur Haftası*” requires critical investigation of its social-cultural significance. Although my informants have acknowledged *onur* as “just a translation” in the beginning, their testimonies about the debates over the use of *onur* through the history of the Pride Weeks in Turkey indicates that its political discourses have also developed as the Pride parades grew bigger.

The website of Oxford Dictionaries Online defined pride as “a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one’s own achievements” and used it in a sentence “he takes great pride in his appearance” (n.d.). The second use of pride is “the consciousness of one’s own dignity” (n.d.). It is important to note that while the direct translation of pride into Turkish is ‘gurur’, ‘onur’ could be translated as ‘dignity’. In Oxford Dictionaries dignity is defined as “the state or quality of being worthy of honor and respect”. ‘*Gurur*’ and *onur* both were used during the course of LGBTI Movement in Turkey for the organization of Pride Weeks however through the debates and efforts to conceptualize this sort of activism *onur* turned out to be more suitable to the course of political activism which I will delve into later in this chapter. As for the international development of the term “Gay Pride”, there is a historical significance for the first definition due to the development of LGBTI activism after the Stonewall Riots, different from the second one i.e. “dignity”. In the next sections, I will try to set an understanding of how these related but different definitions of pride and dignity came to be one of the strongest slogans of LGBTI Movement globally and locally.

Besides these definitions, it is also important to turn to the academic endeavors and activists own ways of defining ‘pride’ and *onur*. Although *onur*’s conceptualization and theorization within the LGBTI Movement and academia in Turkey is almost non-existent; what I will try to do in the second part of this chapter is to generate a preliminary conceptualization based on the narratives of my research participants. On the other hand, pride has been theoretically interrogated in various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and psychology. But first let us focus on the process of the political conceptualization of ‘pride’ and *onur* within LGBTI activism.

## **2.2. Cyclical Development of ‘Gay Pride’**

Where did the notion of “Gay Pride” come from? Stonewall Riot in 1969 had been a turning point in the development of LGBTI politics in general. Through the systematic police raids to spaces where lesbian and gay communities are gathering and socializing in the USA, the raiding of Stonewall Inn in The Christopher Street in New York City set up the corner stone of the struggle against homophobic social and political oppression. Confronting the police and taking up the streets have turned into a protest march next year in 1970. The prominent organizations such as Gay Liberation Front in pre-Stonewall period were the organizing force behind the first decade of these parades. Although the first parades were named to commemorate the 1969 resistance as ‘Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day’ organized by a committee with the same name; in the coming years of these protests, Gay Pride would be used to define and direct the activism towards reclamation of agency and self-esteem for LGBTI communities (Duberman, 1993). Duberman (1993) emphasizes that Stonewall which has become synonymous with the LGBTI resistance and politics; has also become a primary and pioneering symbol for ‘global proportions’. Setting up the pedagogy and the language of the resistance as such the first organizing committee of the Pride Parade (Gay Liberation Front) set the parameters of politics as;

“We are a revolutionary group of men and women formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished. We reject society’s attempt to impose sexual roles and definitions of our nature.” (Belonsky, 2007)

In the 1980's, what had been called "Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day March", had started to be called as Gay Pride Parade vis-à-vis the HIV epidemic and the new structures of activism formed against the biological, social and political threats of this epidemic (Belonsky, 2007). One of the major actors of this transformation not only of the naming of activism but also in the discourse adopted for LGBTI politics was the group called 'ACT UP'. Focusing particularly on the acts of this organization, Deborah Gould (2009) explains how pride and related sentiments were pronounced by the gay and lesbian activists through 1960's, 70's and 80's. Drawing a historicity of political contention and community forming among LGBT people in the USA, she emphasizes the cyclical changes in the expression of feelings such as pride. Gay Pride during the early years of activism was formed as a political discourse, channeling the feelings of shame, social rejection and unrecognition and fear towards the feelings of joy and acceptance of one's sexual and gender identity (Gould, 2009). Earlier in the 1960's, the confrontational street actions were present, yet the political choice of the organizations were mostly towards creating a not-very-threatening image for gays and lesbians, carrying the banners in silence, mostly in the form of a sit-in-protest, gays wearing jackets and lesbians wearing dresses (Sargeant, 2010). However, the police attack in Stonewall Inn in 1969, and the riots afterwards exhibited the potential for the transformation of the movement into a more outward, loud, angry and transgressive one (Ibid.). This "explosion of energy" as Sargeant (a participant and one of the organizers of the 1970 Pride Parade) talks about, drew a new political horizon for gay and lesbian communities in the USA. It became possible to be able to get around tensions of being 'unthreatening', channeling the associated negative emotions such as deviancy, shaming, fear and so on towards the efforts of gathering and being visible. Chanting, dancing, shouting became the forms of this affective expression of anger and pride against degradation. "Say it clear, say it loud. Gay is good, gay is proud" (Sargeant, 2010). As a "pedagogy of feeling" pride became a strong political discourse especially for the early efforts of community making and addressing the issues related to being LGBT (Gould, 2009:68). However, through the late 1970's and 1980's, AIDS crisis had broken out and pride this time gained a nuanced discourse of being proud of the success of the movement facing the biological, social and political results of the epidemic. Despite the hostile, phobic and isolating (or even not recognizing the issue) responses to AIDS epidemic through 70's and 80's, Gould (2009)

states that lesbian and gay organizations were able to counter the devastating results of the disease.

In an effort to create a care-taking, self-help system and safe sex methods, these communities started pressuring the government for legal and financial aid to the sick and at the same time resisting the cultural oppression that had been doubled. She argues that, the sentiments the epidemic had erupted, namely “the heroic sense of success and satisfaction”, were not, this time, underlining the “feelings of gay and lesbians about themselves, about society and non-recognition and rejection, shame and fear” (Gould 2009:57). Although I could concur on the idea that the heroic sentiments were paving the way for further political action for gay and lesbian communities on the legal and financial support by the government, what seems to me as the fear of losing what had been created for the last decade in terms of political esteem as well as fear of death and desperation for finding a cure had a role in the formation of such an activism. It is possible to see the Gay Pride as the bodily, psychological and social manifestation of the AIDS crisis and the accomplishments of the activism against the crisis within LGBTI Movement’s history.

### **2.3. Coining *Onur***

Why would a community of lesbians, gays and transsexuals<sup>6</sup> want to commemorate the atrocities against a gay bar thousands of kilometers away? What would have happened in terms of the naming of the events and the formation of activism in Turkey, if the first ‘Christopher Street Day-Istanbul 93’ had not been prohibited? What were the first debates on the naming of the social-cultural events organized at the last Sunday of June every year?

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<sup>6</sup> I use ‘lesbians, gays and transsexuals’ to refer to the historical formation of political identities within the movement in Turkey. Talking about 1993 would require considering the identity components of the groups. Naming the community as ‘LGBTI’ for explaining the events in 1990’s would not be appropriate as this was not the naming used at the time. The ‘I’ is a recent addition to the movements political frame as well as its name as I have mentioned in the Introduction chapter. Hence, I choose to use LGBTI when talking about the movement in general; yet emphasizing a specific period in the movements history the naming might change as ‘Homosexual’, ‘LGBT’, ‘LGBTT’ or ‘LGBTI’.

Who were these people that started the Pride Weeks in Turkey and what were their motivations? These questions are difficult to answer in the context of this thesis.

During my field research, I was not able to reach anyone who had participated in the first banned events in 1993, let alone any texts indicating the discussions back then. It was only Belgin, who, during our interview, talked about the group “Yeşil Bizans” that İbrahim Eren had formed and how they eventually split into different groups. Although I did not pay attention to this piece of knowledge during our conversation, while transcribing the interview I contacted Belgin again and asked about it. “Yeşil Bizans” was basically a café where İbrahim Eren and his friends were getting together and talking about establishing a party addressing the issues of LGBT rights, ecology, atheism, anti-militarism and socialism in the context of the Radical Democratic Green Party. Belgin asserts that the first of people who got together to found Lambdaİstanbul were from this circle.

After the first public demonstration for addressing the violence against transsexuals in 1987 and the closure of Radical Democratic Green Party in 1989; a group of activists organized the first events that would later be called as *Onur Haftası* / Pride Week, starting in 1993. Many international organizations and activists were invited and at the end of the events a parade was being organized. However, Istanbul governorate prohibited the events and the parade (Lambda), foreign activists were deported and lawsuits were filed against the local organizers. This circumstance led to the formation of Lambdaİstanbul and 1993 became the first year of Pride Weeks.

### **2.3.1. 10 Years of Silence, 10 Years Evolution of Pride Weeks**

The activist practices of LGBTI Movement in Turkey through 1990’s were already diversified between two major groups: Lambdaİstanbul and Kaos GL in Ankara. Group formation, socialization, coming out practices, parties, panels, publishing (Kaos GL magazine particularly) and building up the relationships with other social movements such as feminist movement and socialist movement were basically the main activities. Twice a year, these two groups were coming together for a series of events called ‘Türkiyeli Eşcinseller Buluşması’ consisted of two meetings; Güzİstanbul organized in İstanbul during

fall season and BaharAnkara organized in Ankara in spring. Knowing little about these events, at the beginning of my research I was assuming that these were the precursors of what has come to be known as Pride Weeks in Turkey, however, the field research has indicated that these events are only organized in order to build a sense of community between these two major organizations on the basis of being LGBT. Yeşim narrates these events as:

“The only place where you could see and meet others. They were very crowded events of up to 50 or 60 people. Of course there are some bars in İstanbul but there is no place where you can meet people, no internet no cell phones. Also in Ankara there were no bars or cafés where you could socialize. That’s why those events were becoming a huge opportunity for us to meet and transfer what we have accomplished.”<sup>7</sup>

In terms of socialization and opening, these two events was undoubtedly significant for the history of LGBTI Movement in Turkey. Yet, they were not devoid of tensions. Serdar remembers them as:

“...the site where the power struggle between Lambda and Kaos happening. They created spaces of discussions and debates between these two groups over how to approach and articulate the social conditions LGBT people were in and their own politics. Movie screenings, panels and parties...”<sup>8</sup>

During our interview, Yeşim mentioned that these events were also the sites where some major decisions were made. “What do Homosexuals Want?”<sup>9</sup> was one of the most important document created in these gatherings which was later turned into a press statement in 2002. The significance of this text is perhaps that it still draws a pathway not only for the public in terms of perceiving LGBT people and creating a consciousness towards the violence; but also a guide for the activists for dealing with and acting against heteronormativity. Although the range and the structure of the activities were similar to Pride Week activities, these two

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<sup>7</sup> “Görüşüp buluşabileceğimiz tek ortam. Kalabalık oluyordu 50 60 kişi falan. Yani tamam İstanbulda birkaç bar var ama başka tanışma yolu yok, internet yok, telefon yok. Hatta Ankara’da bar da ya var ya yok buluşup sosyalleşeceğin. Dolayısıyla o etkinlikler bizim için tanışabileceğimiz ve yaptıklarımızı aktarabileceğimiz büyük bir şans oluyordu.”

<sup>8</sup> “Bu etkinlikler Lambda’yla Kaos’un arasındaki güç savaşlarının geçtiği yerdi. Harekete dair, gündeme dair, neler yapılabileceğine dair tartışmalar, kavgalar olurdu. Film gösterimleri, paneller, partiler...”

<sup>9</sup> For the declaration see: <http://www.kaosgl.org/sayfa.php?id=798>

gatherings have an important function in terms of the formation of the political movement. Organized between 1995 and 2004, these gatherings carried the movement one step further towards becoming a Turkey-wide phenomenon.

The term *onur* and its political associations were not on the table between 1993 and 1997. The first series of events in 1993 were called ‘Sexual Liberation Events’<sup>10</sup> and ‘Christopher Street Day – Istanbul 93’. Although no information is left from 1994, the 1995 events were named “İstanbul Gey ve Lezbiyen Övünç Haftası” which was also banned by the municipality. However, the first signs of the conceptualization of pride in the Turkish context both linguistically and theoretically might have started back then. As one of the limitations of my field was that I could not find any activists who were there, participated or organized those events in 1995. How did they decide on translating pride into *övünç*? Were they talking about “being proud of who you are” or “being proud of what they did” as it was conceptualized internationally or was it “just a translation”? Before starting to focus on what my informants articulate in terms of this meaning-making process of *onur*, it is important to note that “Onur Haftası” and “Onur Etkinlikleri” were first used in 1997. Until 2003, there was no other attempts to organize a parade or any sort of street protest specifically for LGBTI issues.

### **2.3.2. *Onur* What?<sup>11</sup>**

Pride Weeks, especially the concept of *onur* became a hot topic of debate between Kaos GL and Lambdaİstanbul activists throughout the second half of the 2000’s. Although Pride Parades are often seen as the “show of the strength” of the movement and has become an accepted and celebrated event within the movement, its historical development was not

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Cinsel Özgürlük Etkinlikleri’

<sup>11</sup> This headline refers to this text ‘Neyin Onuru?’ written by Cihan Hüröğlü, in order to shed a light on the discussions going on between Lambdaİstanbul and Kaos GL. Kaos GL has resisted for a long time to the usage of such a word, arguing that it implies a certain sense of being, a pattern of being LGBT, a conventionality. Unfortunately I was unable to find the original text (including from the author himself) so I will only be using the authors narrations about this text.

without tensions and challenges. *Onur* has come out as a contested area of activism, out of a contested history. Although I could not have a chance to conduct an interview with a Kaos GL member during my fieldwork, I could nevertheless reach some of the texts written about these debates back in 2006. Ali Erol (one of the founding members of Kaos GL) says in a text titled “Pride Problem”: “as I recall, there was nobody saying ‘how could Lambda organize Pride Parade’. I believe gay and lesbian movement has not come to the end of its deconstructive (of heteronormativity) and transformative (implying social transformation) phase within Middle East/Turkey. However, it is too late for the so called ‘Pride Parade’ (Erol, 2006).” Although what he means by being late and the roots of the debate is not in the text, the main arguments were revolving around the concept of *onur* and its connotations as Cihan and Yeşim talks about. Ali, in this text, complains about how the criticisms against *onur* had been left unanswered but rather confronted through and taken as an insult to the labor put in it (Erol, 2006). The partaking in the May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations was stepping stone for LGBTI Movement in terms of the confrontational politics and Erol (2006) states that those instances had its transformative impact on the leftist organizations and right after the first one in 2001, it was normalized in 2002. He continues;

“As recently as the second May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations we attended, no matter what its nature is, ‘Pride Parade’ as the topic in question, has nothing new in it. Its being ‘only for the homosexuals’, cannot be considered new for a late ‘Pride Parade’. When they didn’t get any legal permission in 1993, if Lambda could have said ‘we’ll meet in 1994’, then this parade would mean something. While Lambda already granted its honorable and righteous place within May 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> demonstrations; why would we need the ‘onur’ of a late and nostalgic parade?” (Erol, 2006)

So, rather than insisting on “it can’t be organized”, the reasons of organizing such an event under the name of *onur* was being criticized. The revolving of the main debate around the concept of *onur*, demonstrate the lack of political nuances in something that has been considered as “just a translation”. Therefore, *onur* as a political discourse within LGBTI politics in Turkey, was perhaps first conceptualized and defined in 2007 Pride Week booklet by Cihan. Although he asserts that it was not much of an issue in terms of translation at first, the ongoing political debates between Kaos GL and Lambdaİstanbul over the meaning and political assertions of *onur*, has required some sort of conceptualization. In his words:

“Why onur? Well, when you look at the movement’s past, you’ll see they tried to translate pride as ‘Gurur’ directly (Gurur Haftası). Pride in Christianity is one of the seven sins. Not so cool. Then it was just translated as Onur. I tried to explain this in 2007 Pride Week booklet with the headline ‘Neyin Onuru?’ I conceptualized Onur in relation to the human dignity emphasized at the beginning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>12</sup> as this (being LGBTI) is also a human dignity. Indeed, it does not say ‘pride’ in the English version of the declaration. Kaos was always against Onur. They were saying: ‘Why would I be proud just because I’m gay?’ well it is not an unfair comment but then what? It is called as such in the whole world”<sup>13</sup>

I could not find the booklet and the original text however, the asserted notions of dignity, according to Cihan, was not about being LGBTI per se but about being human regardless of one’s sexuality and gender identity. Pride Weeks were continued to be organized under the same name despite these debates based on the argument that it is not only about the concept but also about the internationality of these events and it’s being a part of what is celebrated and organized in various countries as Cihan stresses later during the interview.

Also in similar vein Erdal explains Onur as follows:

“What should have we said? There were not much of a conceptual discussion. We couldn’t say ‘Gurur Haftası’. Also in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights human dignity is a key concept, we thought this was also a matter of human dignity”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

<sup>13</sup> “Neden onur..yani çok eskilere bakıldığında bazı etkinliklerde ‘gurur’ yazdığını görüyoruz. Bu Pride çevirisi aslında direkt. Pride ingilizce, hristiyanlıkta yedi günahın biri pek hoş bir kelime değil. Onur falan diye çevirildi işte. Ben bunu 2007 Onur Haftası bülteninde ‘Neyin Onuru’ başlığında bir yazıyla açıklamıştım. LGBTİ onurunu İnsan Hakları Bildirgesinin başındaki ‘insanlık onuru’ ile ilişkilendirmiştim. İşte bu da bir insanlık onurudur diye. Ama nitekim Bildirgenin ingilizcesinde İnsanlık onuru pride olarak geçmiyor. Kaos buna hep karşı gelmiştir. ‘sırf gay olduğum için neden onur duyayım ki?’ Derlerdi. Haksız da bir eleştiri değildi ama bu bütün dünyada böyle adlandırılmış.”

<sup>14</sup> “Ne deseydik? Kavramsal tartışma çok yoktu. Gurur Haftası diyemezdik. Bi de İnsan Hakları Bildirgesinde insanlık onuru kilit bi kavram. Bunun da bir insanlık onuru meselesi olduğunu düşündük yani.”

Most of the participants were rather insignificant towards the question of ‘Why Onur?’ Yeşim remembers that it was not much debated, rather they were focusing more on what to say politically during the parade and how to exhibit it. In a similar vein Sinan put it as:

“This is actually only a translation. Instead of producing politics based on pride, we were more focusing on the theme of the parade.”<sup>15</sup>

This statement reminds me what Erdal argues in one of his articles (2012:172) as the momentum that Pride Weeks created have enabled LGBTI Movement to create its own political conjuncture and ways of articulation of these conjunctures. Hate crimes, constitutional rights, representation in the high politics and so on could be examples of these conjunctures articulated by the Pride Weeks and the parade.

However, for Serdar, ‘onur’ was not only a translation or a name for a political theme but it also has always had its own political discourse:

“Not pride of being homosexual. It is the pride of being as good, bad, just or unjust as anyone and everyone. You show your anybody-ness and your pride in being anybody to people vis-à-vis socially trivialized and dishonored existence of homosexuals. You need to show otherwise because homosexuality is perceived as dishonorable and used as a curse.”<sup>16</sup>

During my fieldwork, I have realized a common narration of *onur* as a concept in terms of its non-relativeness of the conventional meanings of pride. It was over and over stressed as just being a translation but on the part of its political connotations, it is not about personality or achievements, not about normative meanings of being good person or bad person. Being LGBTI has no value-impact on a person’s body or character. In fact, it is the total opposite of heteronormative value judgments of what constitutes an honorable life and what not. According to Ülkü, it is an effort of showing the existence of what is deemed as non-existent:

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<sup>15</sup> “Bu aslında çeviri sadece. *Onur* konsepti üzerinden bir politika üretmek değil de, bu yürüyüşlerin temaları üzerine odaklanıyorduk daha çok.”

<sup>16</sup> “Eşcinsel olmanın onuru değil. Her insan kadar iyi, her insan kadar kötü, her insan kadar haklı ve haksız olmanın onuru. Onursuzlaştırılan ve değersizleştirilen kimliğine karşı, orada (yürüyüşte) kendi onurunu, kendi herhangiliğini gösteriyorsun. Eşcinsellik onursuz olduğu ve bir küfür olarak kullanıldığı için bunu tersini göstermen gerekiyor.”

“We need to do something and claim our existence just because our existence is not recognized or abjected. *Onur* emerged as a revival of our existence.”<sup>17</sup>

While listening to these personal thoughts of the participants and processing their understandings, I was constantly reminding myself not to situate this assertion of “anybody-ness” within the parameters of ordinariness. I cannot speculate on what the participants think of being an ‘alien’ to the society other than their implications on *onur* as a form of politics reversing the language of social perception of LGBTI. Nevertheless, I find it crucial to insert the idea that being different is also a reclaimed notion for the LGBTI politics to support the equal and just co-existence in a society. It is important to realize the point of confrontation here. While what is being confronted is the oppression and violence that people are subjected to because of their sexual orientation and gender identities, *onur* is not a political project of reclamation of the morality or decency structures in which violence is justified. *Onur* specifically refers to the de-structuralizing of these social norms around sexuality and their problematizing. An attendant to the first Pride Parade clearly explains the transformative and discursive power of *onur* for the development of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey:

“The meaning of pride for us is not being ashamed of who we are, of our homosexuality. Otherwise it does not insinuate any meanings such as superiority or worthfulness just because we are homosexual. You can call us disgusting, pervert all you want but we are not! We are contented and proud. At first, ‘gurur’ was used but we thought that word resonates with negative concepts such as vanity and arrogance.” (Kaos GL 2003: 40)

Perhaps as response to these argument, Ferhat thinks that *onur* purports strong senses of conventionality and normativity;

“*Onur* and such like are too sharp for me, like morality and purity. So what? Am I saving my honor? I think humane could be used for living proud. I’m not that interested in its naming. It sounds a bit irritating but it is being used for 22 years after all.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Eşcinsel olarak var olmamız tanınmadığı ya da alçaklık olarak tanımlandığı için bir şeyler yapıp, varlığımıza sahip çıkmamız gerekiyor. Onur da var olduğumuzu göstermek adına ortaya çıktı.”

<sup>18</sup> “Onur falan çok keskin şeyler benim için; ahlak, namus gibi. Ne yani? Onur haftası? Onurumu mu kurtarıyorum? İnsani denilebilir bence onurlu yaşamak için. Çok da

Also Deniz was very reactive to my question of why *onur*? Although most of the informants' conceptualization of 'onur' coincided with the emergence of gay pride in the USA as I have introduced earlier, for the first time, an informant was talking about pride per se as it was conceptualized through the AIDS activism:

“I was always against *onur*. I prefer naming it Gurur. I have never supported *onur* but it was called *onur* once. It feels like you are complying with everyone's understanding of *onur*, whose onur, what's onur? I suppose it has emerged from the understanding of confronting the negativity socially attributed to homosexuals but onur as a concept is still something that the society teaches us. Pursuing an honorable life is totally what is being promoted socially and this creates a paradox within us. In this vein, it is different of being proud than being 'onurlu' (honorable). For example at first parade, what I have felt was not *onur* but pride and excitement. I was happy and proud about what we have accomplished, not an individual pride but a communal one. We didn't need to take permission for this, it was the pride of that!”<sup>19</sup>

Despite the efforts to politically situate *onur* vis-à-vis the confrontations of the activists from Kaos GL, such a term which denotes a strong notions of feelings such as achievement, conventionality and differentiation had led to a political split between two groups and Kaos GL, perhaps not in a manner of protesting Pride Weeks in İstanbul but as a practical statement of criticism, started to organize similar series of events in Ankara every May 17<sup>th</sup>, called “Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.”<sup>20</sup> This day is “a protest of the all kind

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bakmıyorum adına. 22 yıldır böyle kullanılıyor, biraz itici geliyor kulağa ama alışkanlık yine de.”

<sup>19</sup> “Ben Onura her zaman karşıydım. Gurur demeyi tercih ederim. Onur'u hiç desteklemedim ama Onur Yürüyüşü denilmişti bir defa. Orda hani herkesin Onur kavramına ayak uydurmuş oluyorsun yani, neye göre onur kime göre onur. Sanırım çıkış noktası biraz, eşcinsellere onursuz, ne istediğini bilmeyen sapık insanlar olarak bakıldığı için, 'ben bunların hepsinin içindeyim ve bundan da onur duyuyorum' diye bir şeyle çıktı ama ordaki onur kelimesi de aslında toplumun bize öğrettiği bir şey. Onurlu yaşamak tamamıyla toplumsal anlamda dayatılan bir şey ve bu bizim içimizde yaşadığımız bir çelişki bence. Bu durumda gururlu olmak başka onurlu olmak başka. Yani orda ilk yürüyüşte benim hissettiğim şey heyecan ve gururdu. Kendimle gurur duyuyordum, arkadaşlarımla gurur duyuyordum. Bireysel anlamda değil, biz bunu yaptık! Kimseden izin almadık! Gururuydu.”

<sup>20</sup>“Homofobi Karşıtı Buluşma.” The term 'transphobia' was added later during the course of the development of these events. In 2015, 17th of May was declared as the International Day Against Homophobia. Hence similar to Pride Week, the naming of those events in Ankara has been situated in a more global web of LGBTI activism.

of physical, moral or symbolic violence against different sexual identities and orientations” (Erol, 2012). What does this statement reside as it is not very different from the content and the discourses of Pride Week’s? These events in Ankara (then spread many other cities in Turkey) was considered as a response to the “slackness of the ‘gay pride’ in the West’ and a call to realize that “the homophobia has not disappeared and still within the conjuncture of homosexual movement in new forms” (Erol, 2012). What exactly the “slackness” is he talking about? If it refers to the Pride Parades especially in the USA and Europe which happens in a festival-like environment and the envisioning of ‘freedom’ they purport, how can we talk about this within Turkey’s context? Did Pride Parades create these senses here as well? How did people ‘celebrate’ Pride Week’s or was it something to be celebrated rather than a place of protest and bitter politics? Having these questions in mind, although *onur* has created a strong political discourse for the LGBTI Movement in Turkey, I concur on the idea that the violence and discrimination still have long way to disappear. However, when we look at *onur* semantically and what kind of political meanings it gained within the local context; I believe Pride Parades and Day against Homophobia and Transphobia stands in the same political spot. After all, at the bottom line, *onur* came to imply the inherent dignity of being human regardless of sexuality or gender and a resistance to all the negative physical and psychological conditions LGBTI people are pushed into. So *onur* as a political concept that LGBTI Movement attaches itself, prepares the social and political grounds of contention vis-à-vis marginalization and oppression. It is the language and the pedagogy of LGBTI activism in Turkey.

### 2.3.3. “Okyanusa Kayıkla Yelken Açmak”: Revival<sup>21</sup>

The debates around the meaning-making process of pride as a concept and pride activism as I have indicated, was mostly done through the early 2000’s. Yet, through these debates, what had led activists to pursue street activism? Why the first Pride Parade was organized ten years after the first attempts that were prohibited? What has changed during these ten years and how it became possible in terms of confrontational activism? Forming a community understanding, reaching out to closeted LGBTI people, socialization through annual gatherings, exchanging the experiences of oppression and violence, creating bodies of knowledge through publishing and having parties, gullüms<sup>22</sup> were setting up the basic forms of activist practices between 1993 and 2003. However, what strikes my curiosity most was the timing and the political environment that had made available the activists to decide to walk on İstiklal Street.

Before going into detail, it is important to state what I mean by ‘confrontational activism’. Partog (2012) argues that the LGBTI movement has gone through an identity seek throughout the 1990’s. According to him, the LGBTI community made an effort to shape the identity that is being deemed as non-existent or negated and at first they have spent their energies towards constituting the political identity itself rather than the ways conventional identity politics deal with oppression (Partog, 2012:171). The activist practices that took place during those years have prepared the conditions for the experimental and epistemological accumulation for the movement’s activism through socialization and politicization of the LGBTI individuals who in one way or another engaged with the political

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<sup>21</sup> Putting the headlines as ‘Silence’ or ‘Revival’ is not to imply a discontinuity within the activism between the years 1993 and 2003. Contrary, those years were perhaps the most crucial period for the movement to improve itself in terms of production of the political knowledge on LGBTI issues both for the community itself and for the proliferation of this knowledge to public via publishings, press statements or events. However, 2003 is significant for the movement and its forms of political contention because for the period coming after that, it is possible to assert that the visibility, both on the part of violence committed against LGBTI’s and the political activism itself, has increased dramatically. Hence, I choose to call 2003 as a revival of LGBTI Movement, getting out on the streets and facing public specifically about the related issues.

<sup>22</sup> Gullüm, a slang word, refers to joyous gatherings or parties among LGBTI people.

and cultural activities organized by Lambdaİstanbul or Kaos GL. One might argue that this very act of grouping and consciousness raising events, transforming the understandings of the social and political environment surrounding us from something to be hidden from or to be afraid of towards something to be challenged and confronted, is itself a confrontational action. This might very well be fair argument yet what I precisely mean by the passage to the confrontational LGBTI activism is the one that happened on the streets. After some time through the end of 1990's LGBTI activists were experiencing protesting and organizing of demonstrations through the affinities built with other movements. That's why, through the accumulation of such experiences and encounters, the root of the activism has changed from understanding the social oppression and conceptualizing the conditions people were thrown into towards confronting those social conditions by bodily showing up on the streets, protesting and claiming rights and justice, especially after 2003.

Through my fieldwork, it was difficult to get my informants talk about the pathways leading to the first parade in 2003. Most of the time I got answers such as "I don't know... We have just decided... Someone offered and we did... I don't remember". So I kept thinking: Was it that simple? Did they "just decide to do it"? How come? It was also very hard to find any traces of documents, photograph or any videos of that first pride parade as well as the memories of the process of its organization. However this doesn't mean that they had nothing to say. Serdar relates the forces that led people towards the need to parade to the process of institutionalization of Lambdaİstanbul:

"There were no one organizing that parade. We were going to just walk that a'way. It was not much of a thing. We designed a t-shirt that has colorful sheep on it, it was cool. I don't remember if we did any complicated event but all the organizations and NGO's that had affinities with Lambda was invited, 30 people were gathered. People were afraid, will anyone attack us or will the police arrest us? people were full of traumas. There was a case of deportation and arresting of activists ten years ago. When Lambda had its own place, having a place means a stable form of power. You exist every day of the week (instead of meeting only on Sundays) when you have your own place. You organize more routine meetings and activities. So more and more people started come to Lambda. Nevertheless people were afraid. We were not used to cameras and many of us were not open to our immediate environments. People were wearing hats and

sunglasses to be incognito... in the end, LGBT's might have participated in other protests but 2003 was the first time that they had walked for their own course."<sup>23</sup>

So the traumas of the past events and atrocities, prohibitions were present at the first parade. As Serdar mentioned later in the interview, LGBTI activists have participated in a variety of demonstrations and protests ranging from May 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> parades to the anti-war demonstrations in 2002 against the invasion of Iraq. So the activists had an archive of experience within street demonstrations, Lambdaİstanbul's acquiring an office of its own, increasing numbers of people engaging in Lambda's activities had all played crucial, empowering role in the decision making process of the first Pride Parade.

This archive of experiences with other social political organizations and groups was also stressed by Erdal. He points to the senses of solidarity among Lambdaİstanbul and other groups (especially feminists) that had paved the way through the first parade:

“Parade was organized as Lambda got empowered which was realized through the recruitment of more people to the organization. Lesbian and bisexual women started to build affinities with feminist organizations. Most of them were going to Amargi<sup>24</sup>. Even most of them only went to Amargi for a while and didn't come to Lambda. Then, there were anarchists and anti-militarists. I don't know if there were LGBTI people among them but we had people who were acquainted with them. These all created a social network. Once we were sure about the support and the solidarity of this environment then we were like 'let's do it'! Because before we were afraid with few people.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Yürüyüşü organize eden kimse yoktu öyle. Şurdan şuraya yürüyelim dendi ve yürüdük. Çok büyük bir şey değildi. Üzerinde renkli renkli koyunlar olan bir tişört tasarladık, havalıydı yani. Hatırlamıyorum öyle çok komplike bir etkinlik yapmış mıydık. Yine de Lambda ile alakası olan sivil toplum kuruluşları çağırıldı ve 30 kişi falan toplandı. İnsanlar korkuyordu, saldırırlar mı, polis tutuklar mı... travma ile doluydular, ki on yıl önce sınırdışı edilen ya da tutuklananlar oldu. Lambda kendi mekanına sahip olunca, mekan stabil bir güç. Artık haftanın her günü varsın mekanın olunca. Daha düzenli toplantılar ve aktiviteler düzenliyorsun ve Lambdaya gelen insanlar arttı. Yine de korkuyordu insanlar. Kameralara alışık değiliz ve birçoğumuz yakın çevremize açık değildik. İnsanlar şapka ve gözlük takarak gizlendiler. Sonuçta LGBTler önceden bir çok yürüyüşe katılmış olabilir ancak 2003 sadece kendileri için yaptıkları ilk yürüyüşü.”

<sup>24</sup> A Feminist women's organization and publishing. See: <http://www.amargidergi.com/yeni/>

<sup>25</sup> Yürüyüş biraz daha Lambda'nın güçlenmesiyle oldu. O da yeni insanların katılımı ve çağırılması ile güçlendi. Lezbiyen ve biseksüel kadınlar feminist örgütlerle bağ kurmaya başladılar. Birçoğu Amargi ile ilişkilendi. Hatta birçoğu bir süre sadece Amargi'ye gittiler,

This first parade was significant in many ways. Deniz who read the press statement at the end of the 2003 Pride Parade implies that it was successful in terms of the ambivalence it created.

“Indeed people were afraid but being able to walk on İstiklal shouting “we are homosexuals not jody, I will not join your army!”, “Mehmet loves Barış”... but neither police nor the public was expecting such an event you know. Police was shocked, didn’t know how to respond.”<sup>26</sup>

In an interview Kaos GL magazine (2003) conducted with the activists who organized this first parade, it was mostly emphasized that this parade was crucial to the visibility aims of the movement. Confrontational LGBTI activism as these interviews point out, emerged prior to the first parade, however, the emotional environment this particular event has created were way more empowering than anything due to the sense of breaking the emotional toll that the prohibition of 1993 parade took. It created and gave an encouragement and motivation to realize being able to walk and make a press statement (Kaos GL, 2003). Although these are not an overt causation of the timing of the parade, the insinuated reason behind it, comes from the sense and acclamation that the activism then, had reached to a certain point where the past anxieties and the senses of inadequacies had been removed. These anxieties yet the empowerment was perhaps best illustrated and narrated by Belgin during our interview:

“Fear was always present. During the hanging of our posters with X before the parade and throughout the parade itself. But still, we were ready and prepared for this society that fears us. Because we have to exist within this society. If the society was an ocean then we were setting sail to that ocean with a tiny boat.”<sup>27</sup>

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Lambda’ya gelmediler. Sonra anarşistler vardı, anti-militaristler vardı. Onların içinde LGBTİ var mıydı bilemem ama onlarla tanışıklı olan insanlar vardı bizde. Bütün bunlar bir sosyal ağ oluşturdu. Bu çevrenin desteğinden emin olunca da ‘e hadi yapalım!’ olduk. Az kişiyle korkuyorduk çünkü.”

<sup>26</sup> “Tabi insanlar korkuyordu ama İstiklal’de “Çürük değil eşcinsel, askere de gitmicem”, “Mehmet Barışı seviyor” gibi sloganlar atarak yürüyebilmek...ama ne polis ne de halk bunu beklemiyordu biliyor musun...polis nasıl hitap edeceğini bilemiyordu şaşkındı.”

<sup>27</sup> “Korku her zaman vardı. X ile yürüyüş afişlerini asarken de vardı, yürüyüş boyunca da vardı. Ama yine de biz, bizi korkutan bu topluma karşı hazırlıklıydık. Ne yaparsan yap bu toplum içinde yapıyorsun çünkü. Toplum eğer bir okyanus ise, biz de bu okyanusa kayıkla yelken açıyorduk.”

## 2.4. From Tens to Thousands: Massification

This energy captured in that tiny boat in 2003 had started to be accelerated in 2005. Despite the backlash in 2004 in terms of the lack of participants (was even less than the first one), introduction of the new activities such as ‘Genetically Modified Tomato Awards’<sup>28</sup> and participation of the celebrities to the events had prompted the popularity of the Pride Week among LGBTI community and the Pride Parades for the Turkish media. For the effect of this particular event, Belgin tells:

“People has worked very hard. Parliamentarians coming from abroad, artists and then for instance pop star Hande Yener came and my very dear Barbaros Şansal, he always attends. The Genetically Modified Tomato Awards did a different magic.”<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, for the first time, Pride Parades was establishing an intense relationship with mass media and popular culture. Belgin, Serdar and Cihan have emphasized the importance of this event as it attracted the media attention. Started to be organized as one of the activities during Pride Weeks in 2005, the awards ironically point out the homophobic and transphobic conjuncture of that year through satirizing the speeches and acts of a variety of people such as politicians, artists, journalists or state institutions and companies etc.

Through integration of such varying forms of events from panels to concerts, parties, workshops and lately the awards; the pride activism got intensified. However, besides these creative forms of activism that led to such an intensification, the political conjuncture and social environment also played a crucial role for that intensification. Cihan and Serdar continuously talks about “peak points” in the history of Pride activism in Turkey in terms of the participation in the parades. Though other informants also pointed out these peaks, they are basically the 2007 Lambdaİstanbul’s closure case and 2013 Gezi Uprisings.

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<sup>28</sup> Hormonlu Domates Ödülleri

<sup>29</sup> “İnsanlar çok çalıştı. Yurt dışından gelen milletvekilleri, sanatçılar...sonracıma mesela pop yıldızı Hande Yener yürüdü o yıl, Barbaros Şansal benim canım ciğerim o hep katılır. Yani Hormonlu Domates Ödülleri ayrı bir büyü yaptı.”

#### 2.4.1. “2007 was a very bad year” – The Closure Case

Having intensified the Pride activism and other community making practices, Lambdaİstanbul was legally founded in 2006, was going to face the threat of closure in 2007. The political atmosphere for LGBTI people, especially for transsexuals, was suffocating in 2007 as Belgin narrates.

“2007 was a very bad year. Police Authorization Law<sup>30</sup> was passed. Oh my God! There was a carnage of transsexuals. Their houses were raided by police every day and the girls were being taken under custody. I was going to lawyers, collecting money from everyone I could find. It was hard but lawyers were important, we needed legal support. I was going to the police stations and oh! You should have seen those awful treatments and derogatory conditions...state mentality!”

The newly passed legislation granted police with even further authority to intervene the workings of NGO’s and political organizations. The organization was accused of being “illegitimate and against morality”, “depriving the cultural codes of Turkish family morals as the basis of Turkish society” (Söyle, 2009). The court case has lasted 2 years but in the end the case was dismissed. Why would a municipality allow first but then sue and try to close an organization? The reason was set rather simple by the Turkish juridical system: “freedoms are essential, but not without limits” (Söyle, 2009). One of the biggest organizational components of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey was stumbling over “public morality”. Belgin witnessed the day police had raided Lambdaİstanbul:

“‘Shut the door, nobody comes in!’ said the police officer. As I was showing them around, he asked ‘where are the dark rooms?’ ‘What dark room!’ I said and I took him by the hand. ‘Come and see. This is the office, this is the meeting room, here the toilets and kitchen and here we have the hall’ and so on. ‘Where are the dark rooms?’ I asked. ‘That’s how we were reported’ he said. Then I continued: ‘When we asked that whether AKP would allow LGBT people among their ranks or not, they told us that we should establish our own party and we did! Why are you now collapsing it all around us?’”

This situation created a massive reaction. International and foreign associations were declaring their supports to Lambdaİstanbul. The hectic working of the activists to gather legal and political support against the closure case reflected itself on 2007 Pride Parade.

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<sup>30</sup> See: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2007/06/20070614-1.htm>

“People carried out a hard work in the closure case and it resonated among other NGO’s, political organizations and also among political figures. Politicians such as Baskın Oran and some others’ speaking of this issue along with the support that other leftist groups gave, and also the international attention to the case as some Belgian parliamentarians’ attending to the protest, we had the biggest Pride Parade until then. It was then, when the parades became uncontrollable.”<sup>31</sup> (Cihan)

Although the campaign that was being carried out against the closure case had a vivid success that had exhibited itself during that year’s parade, Ülkü and Deniz are grounding the first sings of massification prior to 2007. As they stress out the support that Lambdaİstanbul had received against the closure, this solidarity was all based on the previous efforts to build relationships with different political groups:

“I believe Amargi Café was effective in this matter a bit. Feminists were the first ones who supported the (LGBTI) Movement. We used to hang out in various places and they would have an idea of what kind of people homosexuals were. By this means... There, we were doing panels and sessions about homosexuality. For instance, attending to May 1<sup>st</sup> was leading the movement towards embracing different issues. Then there was much solidarity with anti-militarists over the cause of conscientious rejection. This led us gain the anarchists respect. So, that crowd that day was formed this way...”<sup>32</sup> (Ülkü)

2007 was important in many ways, one thing that the networks that had been created was bringing results of solidarity at the time of controversy and oppression. But also there was one other thing happened at 2007 Pride Parade that was the first use of the big rainbow flag. Cihan points to the significance of this flag for that year’s parade as follows:

“There, it was very important, that the flag which Belgians brought. At the end of the parade, X laid on that flag and we didn’t give it back. That flag was very

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<sup>31</sup> “İnsanlar kapama davası konusunda çok çalıştı ve bu da diğer STKlar ve bazı siyasi figürlerin arasında yankı uyandırdı. Baskın Oran gibi bazı politikacıların bu sorun hakkında konuşmaları, diğer sol grupların dayanışması ve hatta yürüyüşe katılan birkaç Belçikalı milletvekilleri gibi uluslararası ilgiyle birlikte o zamana kadarki en büyük Onur Yürüyüşünü yaptık. O zaman işte yürüyüşler kontrol edilemez hale geldi.”

<sup>32</sup> “Burada birazcık Amargi Kafenin etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. Feministler hareketi ilk destekleyenlerdi. Farklı mekanlarda takılırdık falan ve işte eşcinsellerin nasıl insanlar oldupuna dair de diğer örgütler bir fikir edinmiş oldular. Mesela önceden 1 Mayıs’a katılınması, hareketin farklı konuları da sahiplenmesini sağladı. Sonra anti-militaristlerle vicdani red üzerinden çok dayanışma oldu. Bu da bize anarşistlerin saygısını kazandırdı. Yani o günkü kalabalık böyle böyle oldu.”

expensive and they wanted to take it back but we resisted so they just gave up. Then, after started to walk with that flag, the later parades got even more crowded. The flag kept the atmosphere high because it covered even more space than the participants and was showing the parade bigger than it was.”<sup>33</sup>

I find it crucial to state that 2007 had been a year when the LGBTI Movement was able to recruit people from other groups in solidarity to counter what was directly about homophobia. However, I cannot stop thinking about why 2007 had to be more crowded than 2003? Were the relationships with other movements weaker? Perhaps. But the reason of my uneasiness about this has always been the invisibility of the violence and discriminations against LGBTI people. I do not intend to assert that those other groups joined 2007 parade was not aware of the systematic and symbolic violence but I want to point out to the concreteness of the situation. A concrete example of homophobia, in times of crisis becomes more supportable than those around discursive, symbolic violence such as cultural stigmatization. However, the systematic effort in order to face with the legal challenges of the heteronormative political setting was for the first time emanated hectically towards a larger public which is not only consisted of LGBTI's. Having an opportunity to create an opening not only to other political arenas but also to the international arena and the use of the rainbow flag as a symbol of the movement marked both Pride activism's challenges and its possibilities of facing those challenges. In light of this, let's see what kind of debates and breaking points were dealt with after 2007 onwards through focusing on the narratives of the activists.

## **2.5. Challenges of Pride Activism in Turkey**

### **2.5.1. Overarching Rainbow: The Issue of Banners in Pride Parades**

Most of the activists I have interviewed was pointing to the doubling effect of these developments in 2005, 2007 and the solidarity activism prior to these dates. While Belgin,

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<sup>33</sup> Orda şey çok önemliydi, bu Belçikalıların getirdiği bayrak. Yürüyüşün sonunda X onun üstüne yattı ve geri vermedik. O bayrak çok pahalı ha. Ve geri istediler ama vermedik direndik e onlarda vazgeçtiler. İşte o bayrakla yürünmeye başladıktan sonra, sonraki eylemler daha da kalabalıklaştı. Bayrak eylemin atmosferini yukarıda tuttu çünkü hani bayrak eyleme katılanlardan daha fazla yer kaplıyordu. E bu da eylemi daha büyük gösteriyordu.”

Cihan and Serdar emphasize the importance of the local and international reaction the closure case had received, Deniz and Ülkü's narratives explains that these instances of rising activism cannot be considered in particular but in a processual understanding.

Within this process, the second half of the 2000's onwards could be considered as a dramatic increase in the LGBTI activism in Turkey. Many LGBTI groups and organizations were being formed all around Turkey and in various universities. Having a burgeoning LGBTI activism, created a tension of fragmentation in Pride Parades. What I mean by fragmentation is the different groups and organizations participating in the Pride Parade. Yet before going into that, I think it is essential to consider who has been organizing Pride Weeks and Parades since 2003. Lambdaİstanbul was the only organization that was working actively in İstanbul throughout 1990's. A group of women, besides, also formed another group called 'Sisters of Venus' as the first lesbian organization in Turkey in 1995 (Yıldız, 2007). However I was not able to find any information about this lesbian group's participation in the organization of the Pride Weeks in 1990's. So for a decade, activists from Lambdaİstanbul were the only ones that were organizing these events. Erdal remembers that this has continued until 2007:

“Pride Week, at first, was an event organized only by Lambdaİstanbul. But in 2007 when the closure case had created a big reaction and other groups was beginning to be formed, then it was no longer only Lambda's.”<sup>34</sup>

It did start to be considered not as an activity of Lambdaİstanbul only but it was the only activity where LGBTI's could have raised their voice for their own course. So, the debate about the opening of different political groups' banners during parade was becoming a principal of the Pride activism but it goes way back to the very first parade. Deniz states that this tension within the organization of Pride Parades had a specific cause at first:

“Oh we told that we didn't want different groups to open their banners way back in the first Pride Parade. This has been always in the leftist structures. They are always in a position of forming cortege, appropriating for themselves or taking credit for things. That's why, we didn't like that they would've take the credit for the homosexual contention. On top of that, our discourses were not the same! I mean, as a group of anti-militarist homosexuals, how could we have cooperate with a group shouting 'We will fight for revolution'? I find these relationships

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<sup>34</sup> “Onur Haftası başlarda hep sadece Lambdaİstanbul tarafından organize edildi. Ama ne zaman 2007'de kapama davası oldu ve büyük bir tepki uyandırdı ve başka başka gruplar oluşmaya başladı, o zaman artık Lambda'nın olmaktan çıktı.”

beneficial in terms of solidarity and raising consciousness but for me, it is more important for homosexuals feel more comfortable there.”<sup>35</sup>

Similarly Cihan stresses this tension against the socialist groups and their tendency to include these kind of social phenomenon into their conventional ways of protests:

“The basic discussion there was about not coming with organizational banners. I am not thinking like that now but then, for a long time we said that everyone can have their own personal slogans or placards but not an organizational banner. Let’s not turn this into May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations, namely let’s not make corteges. Especially socialist groups were doing this. You see, there was HBT<sup>36</sup>. Socialist homosexuals tried to dominate the parade by insisting on bringing their own flags and banners in 2008 and 2009. This is a principal of Pride Week, why are you breaking it? Socialist groups have always violated this. However, later Listag<sup>37</sup> opened their banner, İstanbul LBTT did so then Keskesor as well, The Red of Rainbow<sup>38</sup> and so forth. I was saying that we first need to establish our own identity and our own politics independently.”<sup>39</sup>

This was the central point of the debate. Pride Weeks and the parade afterwards are the important spheres where LGBTI Movement could create its own political conjuncture if not only. Hence, Pride Parade’s being the biggest event that this conjuncture would be canalized

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<sup>35</sup> “Ya biz ta ilk Onur Yürüyüşün’de farklı grupların pankart açmamasını söylemiştik. Bu solun yapısında her zaman vardır. Hep bir kortej yapma, kendi içine alma ya da bundan pay çıkarma durumundalar her zaman. Bu nedenle eşcinsellik meselesini kendilerine yormalarından haz almıyorduk o zamanlar. Üstüne bir de söylemimiz bir değildi ki! Yani bir grup anti-militarist eşcinsel olarak, ‘Devrim için Savaşacağız’ diyen bir grupla nasıl ortaklaşacaktık ki? Ben kurulan ilişkileri dayanışma ve bilinçlenme açısından faydalı buluyorum ama benim için eşcinsellerin orda kendilerini rahat hissetmeleri daha önemli.”

<sup>36</sup> ‘Sosyalist EBT Hareketi’ (Socialist Homosexual, Bisexual and Transsexual Movement). See: <https://sosyalistebt.wordpress.com/>

<sup>37</sup> ‘Families of LGBTI’s in İstanbul’ See: <https://listag.wordpress.com/english/>

<sup>38</sup> ‘Gökkuşağının Kızılı’ another socialist LGBTI group. See: <http://gokkusagininkizili.org/>

<sup>39</sup> “Ordaki temel tartışma örgüt pankartlarıyla gelinmesindi. Artık o görüşte değilim ama biz uzun süreler şey dedik hani lütfen herkes istediği dövizi yapсын gelsin ama pankart taşımasın. 1 Mayıs’a dönüşmesin, kortej olmayalım yani. Bunu özellikle sosyalist gruplar yapıyordu. İşte EBT vardı. Sosyalist eşcinseller yürüyüşü domine etmeye çalışmak için biz ille de bayraklarımızı getireceiz diye direttiler 2008 ve 2009da. Onur haftasının ilkesi bu yani niye bozuyorsun ki? Sosyalist gruplar bunu hep violate ettiler. Fakat sonra Listag açtı pankartını, İstanbul LBTT aynı şekilde, Keskesor da, Gökkuşağının Kızılı falan... Hani diyordum ki, bizim bağımsız bir şekilde kendi kimliğimizi ve politikamızı oturtmamız lazım önce.”

to larger public would eventually brought this resistance to bringing different organizational banners. Beyond the participation in the Pride Parades, this attitude was a general point in the larger movement context. “We had only one sensitivity. This organization (Kaos GL) must stay as the independent self-organization of the homosexuals. Thus, we didn’t allow this organization to fall under and became a showcase embellishment of any sort of organization” (Erol, 2008). Especially throughout the second half of the 1990’s and 2000’s, when the movement gradually build relations with other movements such as feminists and workers’ movement, this sensitiveness was a matter of debate.

Nevertheless, although this particular principal sounds reasonable for the years when the participation was relatively lower (both to the parade and to the regular events of the LGBTI organizations), is it possible to carry out this debate despite the increase both in the newly established various LGBTI organizations in various cities and universities, and in the participation to the parades, especially after 2007? Cihan and Yeşim points to the importance of the context within this debate and to the progress of the movement:

“There was such a threat before but now it has become endless and uncontrollable and nobody can appropriate and take credit for it even if they want to. And on the part of the sub-organizations<sup>40</sup> such as İstanbul LBTT and Listag we weren’t objecting much.”<sup>41</sup> (Cihan)

“It’s necessity has passed away I think. People are missing something, if a decision was made sometimes, what was its reason...now that space is claimed by various groups. Nobody would give a damn if someone come and act like it’s their own.” (Yeşim)

### **So is it OK for Lambda to walk there with their own banners?**

“I think we shall use it now. We deliberately didn’t want it in those first years. This why, Pride Parade is not a parade of an organization. It is a parade of a social group. That’s why we were not only people who know and like Lambda. We wanted it to be a space for anyone could come when we were debating about this.

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<sup>40</sup> Cihan particularly used the term ‘öz örgütlenme’ at this point. I was not able to find a direct translation for this term but it initially implies those organizations under which are organized in LGBTI Movement only.

<sup>41</sup> “İşte önceden böyle bir tehdit vardı ama şu anda ucu bucağı belli olmayan kontrol edilemez hale geldi ve isteseler de burayı kendilerine mal edemezler. Diğer örgütler konusunda ise biz İstanbul LBTT ve Listag gibi öz örgütlenmelere çok da karşı geliyorduk.”

We were allergic to the cortege mindset. This strategy has an important effect now.”<sup>42</sup>(Yeşim)

Staking a claim over its own sphere of politics without degenerating the affinities with other political movements and purporting the idea of a politics of not an organization but of a portion of society varying in terms of political affiliation, coming from different social classes, ethnicities and religions, LGBTI Movement is, as Yeşim emphasizes, a space for all. However, Belgin was uncomfortable with all these discourses of collectivity and particular subjectivity that differs LGBTI's from others in terms of the organization of Pride Parades. She stressed the idea that if this principal is going to be carried on there would be further political splits in the movement as well as in participating Pride Parades:

“If this is a polyphonic orchestra, then everyone can walk with their own group. Well this is also an imposition! Why wouldn't there be symbols of every group? What would this break my dear? Kaos, Red Umbrella, Hebun, Lambda, Pembe Hayat... Where's the harm? If there is such an oppression, then everyone would start to organize their own parades.”<sup>43</sup>

Also Serdar explains why it is important to have a sense of multiplicity as well as the senses of community in the Pride Parades:

“Everyone could be able to realize and generate themselves and their political conjuncture there. Everyone can be seen there as they wish. Non-homosexual groups can also exist there and bring their own conjuncture. They don't have to

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<sup>42</sup> “Onun gerekliliği geçti bence artık. İnsanlar bir şeyleri kaçırıyorlar. Bi zaman bi karar alınmışsa onun alınma nedeni neydi... Şuan o alan çok çeşitli gruplar tarafından sahiplenilmiş ve birisi gelip kendine maletmeye kalktığı zaman kimse ipelemez.”

### **Yani Lambda'nın kendi pankartıyla yürümesinde sorun yok öyleyse?**

“Artık kullansak olur bence. İlk yıllarda bilinçli olarak istemedik bunu. Şundan dolayı, Onur Yürüyüşü bir örgütün yürüyüşü değil bir sosyal kesimin yürüyüşü. O nedenle biz sadece Lambda'yı bilen ve seven insanlar değildik. Orada herkesin gelebileceği bir yer olsun istedik. Kortej kafasına alerjimiz vardı. Bu stratejinin şimdi çok büyük bir etkisi var.”

<sup>43</sup> “Madem bu çok sesli bir orchestra, o zaman herkes kendi grubuyla yürüyebilir. E bu da bir dayatma! Her grubun bir simgesi niye olmasın ki orada? Neyi bozarki bu hayatım? Kaos, Kırmızı Şemsiye, Hebun, Lambda, Pembe Hayat... Bunda ne zarar var? Böyle baskı olmaya devam ederse herkes kendi yürüyüşünü yapmaya başlıcak.”

shout ‘We are queer’. But in this case, that rainbow flag should pass over their heads. There shall be an inclusiveness.”<sup>44</sup>

Afterall, Ferhat still thinks that this debate is relevant even today not only on the basis of the threats of being submerged to conventional leftist protests with corteges but also on the basis of identification. Pride Week, according to Ferhat, is a trans-organizational event on the part of its organization process and hence the parade resonates its form of activism which is not dependent on a particular organization. He continues as follows:

“When we say Pride Week, we mean a trans-organizational thing. That’s why we try to produce our words under one roof and one rainbow. There is no meaning in walking by corteges. We all try to get together under the rainbow. But let me exemplify the other way; there walks a particular group in the front and they have a banner in front of them, and there many people behind them. Those thousands walking behind that banner are directly identified with that group and their discourses. Then everyone seems to be a member of let’s say Hevi LGBT. Well, what if people don’t want to be seen that way?”<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly the emphasis on the usage of different organizational banners in the Pride Parade has created tensions of collectivity and multiplicity within the movement. Throughout the progress of the Pride activism in Turkey, the increase both in the affinities with other movements and in the number of different LGBTI organizations had a specific impact on what started to be a political and cultural activity of a singular LGBTI organization later becoming a phenomenal political protest of LGBTI movement Turkey-wide. The activism within this space transformed itself in a trans-organizational form. So within its historicity and contextuality, on the one hand, Yeşim and Cihan are confident enough to declare the unnecessaryness of such a principal due to the empowering LGBTI politics vis-à-vis

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<sup>44</sup> “Orada herkes kendini ve kendi gündemini var edebilmeli. Herkes nasıl istiyorsa öyle görünsün. Eşcinsel olmayan gruplar da kendini var edebilsin ve kendi gündemini getirebilsin. İlla ibneyiz diye bağırımları gerekmiyor. Ama hani üzerlerinden o gökkuşağı bayrağı bir geçsin. Bir kapsayıcılık olsun.”

<sup>45</sup> “Onur haftası denilince dernekler üstü bir şey demek istiyoruz. O yüzden tek bir çatı altında, tek bir gökkuşağı altında söz üretmeye çalışıyoruz. Kortej kortej yürümenin bir anlamı yok. Hepimiz gökkuşağının altında toplanmaya çalışıyoruz. Ama diğer türlü örnek vereyim: önde belli bir grup yürüyor ve onların önünde bir pankart var ve arkalarında da insanlar var. O pankartın arkasındaki binlerce insan direk o grupla ve onların söylemleri ile eşleştiriliyor. Diyelinki herkes Hevi LGBTnin üyesiymiş gibi oluyor. E insnalar belki öyle görünmek istemiyor?”

vacuuming tendency of socialist agendas. But, on the other hand Ferhat is still uneasy about this debate based on the issue of identification which I think is a matter of personal concern. Considering the Pride Parades' size and content together with the point where LGBTI Movement in Turkey has come today, the splits are but a natural result of the growth of the movement. Therefore, I believe this banner issue in the organization of the parade has come to a point where this growth is being challenged with the tensions of the past. Both for the self LGBTI organizations and for the other political organizations from different arenas, carrying a group banner would only show how spread and how acknowledged the LGBTI politics is.

### **2.5.2. Structural Challenges and Debates around Funding**

From the early stages of the movement, LGBTI groups in Turkey have been employing non-hierarchical and horizontal organizational practices as a political stance. As the movement progressed and the visibility of the political activism increased, the previous groups such as Kaos GL<sup>46</sup> and Lambdaİstanbul have become official associations. However this progress have brought up the issue of institutionalization within those groups. These debates have also resonated within Pride activism, especially for its organization period. As I have mentioned before, Pride Parades in İstanbul are organized by a group of people (not only by activists but also by anyone who want to volunteer) in a trans-organizational fashion. Yet, this has resulted in a flow of different people participating in the organization of parades every year which impedes a healthy transmission of experience as Cihan expressed:

“There was a political conflict there. These debates came about 2007 then we-a couple of friends in 2010, I mean before SpoD was established, said “Let’s reform Lambda, there are these models etc.” Of course there might be some cadre set up for instance, we debated a lot about professionalization in Lambda. We were against professionalization, because we wanted to rotate and didn’t let anyone to have the same responsibility more than three months. But that was a

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<sup>46</sup> Due to my research participants’ being mostly from Lambdaİstanbul or their being associated with Lambdaİstanbul in the past, I will refer only to those debates among the activists in Lambdaİstanbul. It is important to keep in mind that Kaos GL have also employed the same political choice in its organizational practices however, I am still unaware of the situation of these debates there.

huge impediment to the accumulation of knowledge. Well it was it was giving the sense of solidarity to people upto some point but... I mean my problem was like this: through the process of the prohibition of organization as the reaction that the closure case of Lambda had created in Europe; both in Turkey and abroad, people's expectations from Lambda was bigger than the Lambda itself. I mean people were coming to Lambda with expecting help and support about something then Lambda was saying something if there was someone to open the door or not. It shouldn't be like that.

### **What was the effect of this situation to the organization of pride weeks?**

That is a life-draining issue. There is not an organizational responsibility. You talk about, debate about the same things and you have silly ideas but no result. I mean everything just happens. Happens I mean happens somehow and if you are in it you wear yourself out but if you are out you be happy. I prefer to be out and to be happy anymore because you get funding but there is no account for it. Nobody has no idea about the money we received from Holland last year, flags lost... But everyone grabs some part of the job in the last few weeks I mean you get everything done.

### **I think there are efforts to establish a platform (for Pride organizations) recently.**

Well let's see how many from people last year will be there this year and continue that debate. I said how many times... This is, as I said, a culture that does not pay attention to the instutionalization because this culture in Lambda interestingly never changes. I mean people are changing but this culture stays. I don't know how and we couldn't change it. If it wasn't like this a lot of people could be adressed to others, the ways to be included are set... I mean as the rules of democracy you could then say that "But I cannot participate because of this and that and my words are unheard for this and that". There is democracy so to say but no rules that's why there is an understanding of democracy which could be violated at any moment and no one can question each other I mean someone are doing something with good will I'm not saying they are not but those people are leaving and the newcomers don't know anything. But the activities are happening somehow are being organized somehow at full speed. Something slopy is happening with people running around and when you look from the outside it looks good."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Orda politik olarak bir anlaşmazlık vardı yani. 2007 gibi ortaya çıktı bu tartışmalar ancak, sonra biz bikaç arkadaş, yani SPoD kurulmadan önce, 2010da dedik ki arkadaşlar Lambdayı bir reforme edelim mi yani kurumun devamını sağlayacak kurumsallaşma çalışması yapalım mı, hani modeller şunlar olabilir falan dedik. Biraz kadrolaşma da olabilir tabi. Mesela Lambdada şey tartışmaları çok oldu; uzmanlaşma tartışmaları çok oldu. Uzmanlaşmaya karşıyız biz herkes aynı sorumluluğu 3 aydan fazla yapmasın rotasyon olsun diye. O bilgi birikimine acaip ket vuran bir şeydi. Bir yere kadar insanlar içinde dayanışma duygusu oluşturuyor falan ama...yani şöyle bişiy benim temel sıkıntımdı hani Lambdanın bu, derneğin yasaklanması süreciyle Avrupada uyandırdığı yankıyla hem Avrupada dışarda hem de

Professionalization and institutionalization have marked the tenets of these debates yet these structural changes also require a stable cadre within those associations with some type of payment. For the organization committee of Pride Parades, these debates are still dubious however I think it is highly critical to think on possible political solutions those debates. Why would becoming an institution with activists working as staff; be a hindrance to practices of non-hierarchical and horizontal organizational activism? Can these two forms of political organization comply with each other without falling into the relations of hierarchy and power? What kind of a democratic system can be conducted within a Pride organization committee if it is reformed as a platform? I will not try to find answers to these questions in this thesis however, this issue of institutionalization is, I second Cihan on this, a significant challenge to Pride activism, to its transmission of experience on the basis of its organization process.

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Türkiyede insanların Lambdadan beklentisi Lambdanın kendisinden büyüktü. Hani insanlar Lambdaya bir beklentiyle geliyor hani şu konuda yardımcı olur musunuz şu konuda destek olur musunuz diye. Lambda diyor ki ya o sırada kapıyı açan arkadaş bişey söylese söyler söylemezse söylemez. Yani öyle olmaması lazımdı.”

**“Peki bu durumun Onur Haftası organizasyonuna etkisi ne oldu?”**

“Oralar ömür törpüsü yani. Aynı şeyleri tekrar konuşursun tekrar tartışırsın salak saçma fikirler çıkar hiç bir sonuç çıkmaz yani örgütsel sorumluluk yoktur. Hani her şey oluverir. Olur yani bi şekilde olur ve sen içine girersen yıpranırsın dışında olunca mutlu olursun. Ben dışarda durup mutlu olmayı tercih ediyorum artık çünkü para alınır paranın hesabı verilmez, Hollanda’dan geçen sene para alındı o paralar nereye gitti kimsenin fikri yok, bayraklar kaybolur... ama hani son bir kaç haftada hurraaa herkes bişeyin ucundan tutar yani çok fazla boşluk kalmaz.”

**“Şu aralar bir platformlaşma tartışmaları var sanırsam.”**

“Bak bakalım geçen sene yer almış insanlardan bu sene kaç tanesi kalacak da o tartışmayı devam ettirecek. 80 kere söylenmiştir bu da hani yani dediğim gibi kurumsallaşmaya önem vermeyen bir kültürden, yani bu kültür çünkü Lambdada çok ilginçtir bu değişmiyor. Yani insanlar değişiyor bu kültür kalıyor. Nasıl oluyor hiç bir fikrim yok ve değiştiremedik de. Böyle olmasa bi çok insan muhattap alınabilecek, dahil olmanın yolu yordamı belli...yani sen diyebilirsin ki ben dahil olamıyorum şu şu nedenlerden dolayı sözlerim şuralarda geçersiz hani demokrasinin kuralları bunlar. Güya demokrasi var ama kuralları yok o yüzden de her an violate edilebilecek bir demokrasi anlayışı yani. Kimse de hesap soramıyor birbirinden. Yani birileri iyi niyetle bir şeyler yapıyor. Yapıyor yapmıyor demiyorum. Ama o insanlar gidiyorlar sonra yeni gelenler de bilmiyor... Ama etkinlikler bir şekilde oluyor yani son gazla, çakma o oraya gidiyor bu buraya koşuyor bir şeyler çıkıyor ortaya eksik saçma ama dışardan baktığında da aa güzel diyorsun.

In conjunction with these debates, the funding of these groups' activist practices have also become a hot issue within LGBTI activism in Turkey. As I could follow the discussions and debates from the social media, especially since 2013, the main polemic is revolving around the political choice of funding the events and organizations from international institutions such as European Union or general consulates of countries like Holland or Sweden through presenting a project and the principle of transparency of the outlays. As far as I am concerned, there has been two camps to these debates as those who assert that those funds are being "allegedly" used for "personal needs" and those who are against these accusations and assert that "the money from those institutions is barely enough for the organizational needs". Related to the principal of non-hierarchical and horizontal organizational practices, application to the funding from those institutions have faced objections within the group especially since 2007, after Lambdaİstanbul's becoming an official association. Cihan on this issue narrates as follows:

"We resisted a lot not to get into the projects. But we did. Because we were constantly receiving organizational schemes from Holland so that we could receive funding from there. And we were reacting. X was sending those schemes and we were like "What are you doing X we don't want it we are trying to get organized horizontally, we are against this power relations... These won't fit us." But when I was gone for England it got accepted somehow. That process (of project writing and becoming an institution) had worn people a lot but also good things happened. We have rented a bigger place because of the money we had received but then there was no control and account of that money crises happened about who is going to be regular staff. Well we went into that mind."<sup>48</sup>

These objections were mostly stated by those activist who were politically defining themselves as anarchists or socialists as Belgin tells during our conversation on the founding of İstanbul LGBTI (another LGBTI organization mostly specialized on the issues of transsexuality in Turkey):

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<sup>48</sup> Biz çok direndik projelere girmek için. Ama girilirdi çünkü devamlı bize Hollanda'dan örgüt şemaları geliyordu. Şöyle örgütlenin para verelim diye. Biz de tepkiyle karşılıyorduk falan yani X falan gönderiyordu 'X napıyorsun biz istemiyoruz yatay örgütlenmeye çalışıyoruz iktidara karşıyız falan filan...yani böyle yapılar bize uymaz falan diye'. Ben İngiltereye gittiğim sene bir şekilde olur çıkmış ordan. Ve olmuş kabul edilmiş. Çok yıprattı o süreç herkesi ama hani tabiki iyi şeyler de oldu. Daha büyük bir mekana çıkıldı para olduğu için falan ama o paranın kontrolü olmadı bütçe tutulmadı krizler çıktı çalışan çalışmayan kim olacak falan. O zamanlar daha böyle proje kafasına gidildi yani.

“...soon gays will establish a separate organization, lesbians as well because this is what the system wants and we are heading that direction. Trans Pride got separated you see. There is intolerance, am I clear? There was no communication and we didn't endure each other. Think this way: Lambda is the first organization to have a project those times... When a project came up we were raising the roof, oh my God! That leftist mentality, as if they are all a Mao all Marks. Anyway I can't remember if it is 2006, we decided to write a project and received money and moved to our new place. Well we did but how was this money spent, how much was gone where? No one was accounting before anyone! Even if they did it was in old-boy network...”<sup>49</sup>

The political debate of “*projecilik*”<sup>50</sup> and abuse of the principle of transparency on the matters of expenditure is perhaps most relevant to the organization of Pride Weeks which can be considered as the most concentrated and massively participated LGBTI organization of every year. Accommodating guest speakers for the panels and workshops, renting the venues of the events and activities, production of the thousands of banners and placards for the parade and the reparation of the big rainbow flag requires a certain amount of money. Belgin tells that:

**“So how did you finance Pride Parades? The same debates there as well?”**

The same! We were going to do 8<sup>th</sup> Pride Parade but there was no money we need money to organize this, don't we? Where are you going to get it from? You're going to write a project! I mean no one was giving money. Then X obtained finance but oh Y caused quite a stir “We don't want it!” Our anarchist and leftist gays rose against again. It happened eventually! That money was spent pure and simple.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> ...yakında geyler de ayrı dernek kuracak lezbiyenler de. Sistemin istediği de bu çünkü, buraya gidiyoruz. İşte Trans Pride ayrıldı. Hoşgörüsüzlük var anlatabildim mi? Paylaşım yapılamıyordu, birbirimize karşı tahammülümüz yoktu. Şöyle düşün: Lambda ilk proje alan örgüttü o zamanlar...bir proje gündeme geldiğinde allaaah bir kıyamet kopardı. İşte o sol kafa, sanırsın hepsi birer Mao hepsi birer Marx. Neyse 2006 mıydı neydi, proje yazma kararı aldık parayı aldık yeni binamıza çıktık. E çıktık da bu para nasıl harcandı, ne kadar geldi ne gitti? Kimse kimseye hesap vermiyor! Verilse bile ahbap çavuş ilişkisinde...

<sup>50</sup> It refers to sort of a project fetishism narrated by those who accuse these major LGBTI organizations with pocketing their funds and using capitalist channels to finance their political events.

<sup>51</sup> **Peki Onur Yürüyüşlerini nasıl finanse ediyordunuz? Aynı tartışmalar orda da var mıydı?**

“E aynı şey! 8. Onur Yürüyüşünü yapamaz para yok. Bu organizasyonu yapabilmek için para lazım dimi? Nerden alacaksın? Proje yazacaksın! Yok yani kimse vermiyor. Sonra işte X bir

Also Ferhat explains that this is becoming an issue every year on the basis of political dimensions of financing these expenditures:

“We discuss about whether to get funding or not for the organization (of Pride Week) for three months. These debates always open question. After wearing out for that three months we realize that the time has come and we still have no money. Then we write a project all of a sudden and receive that money and get the job done.”<sup>52</sup>

These debates around funding, “*projecilik*” and the political connotations of “self-funding” activism vis-à-vis an activism in relation with international organizations is both forming a challenge to the structure of the movement in general and the organization of Pride Weeks in particular. While the debates of pocketing and non-transparent management of the finance along with the alleged transphobia within Lambdaİstanbul has led to the establishment of İstanbul LGBTT in 2007; the demands of institutionalization and the objections towards it has resulted in the establishment of SPoD (Association of Studies of Social Policies on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation) in 2010. As I have mentioned, the direction of these debates are still dubious despite the recent efforts of presenting the official accounts of the outlays and expenditures by İstanbul LGBTT, Kaos GL and Lambdaİstanbul; time will tell us the direction of this challenges.

### **2.5.3. Trans Pride Weeks and Challenges of Trans Pride Activism**

Within these debates and developments; in 2009, for the first time transsexuals are gathered for what is be known as Trans Pride Parade. Only a week before Pride Weeks every year Trans Pride Weeks host various panels and activities similar to Pride Weeks’ and a parade at the end. Transsexuality, especially transsexual women, are one of the sites that brings a distinction to the LGBTI Movement in Turkey from its international contemporaries. Despite the separate and distinct development of transsexual politics and that of gays and lesbians in

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finansman buldu amaaan Y ortalığı karıştırdı. İstemezük! Bizim yine solcu anarşist geylerimiz ayağa kalktı. Sonunda noldu! O para alındı bal gibi de harcandı.

<sup>52</sup> Organizasyonda fon alınsın mı alınmasın mı 3 ay tartışırız. Bu tartışmalar bir sonuca bağlanmıyor. O 3 aylık yıpranmanın sonunda bakıyoruz ki zaman gelmiş ve elde para yok, hop bir proje yazılıyor ve o para alınıp işler hallediliyor.

Europe and the USA; transsexual women have been a founding party to the LGBTI politics in Turkey as they have always been on the front lines. Yet the debates around exclusion and misogyny against transsexuals has been a hot issue within LGBTI Movement in Turkey. Although some of the participants claim that transsexuals' (especially transsexual women's) participation was not much in the organizational events and meetings due to their being sex workers and the schedule they work by saying that "they work all night so they had to sleep all day, they didn't have much time to come and join". However, could this be the reason for one of the most debated issue within LGBTI Movement? What was the issue about transsexual's visibility in the movement and in particular what was the reason for transsexuals to organize a Pride Parade of their own? In what ways its political dimension differs from Pride Week's? Besides these questions, despite Trans Pride Week's claim to create a space for addressing issues that are more particularly around transsexuality in Turkey, the participation is yet another sphere to investigate. Based on my participation and observation the majority of the participants are not transsexuals themselves. Indeed it is critical to situate the ambiguity of defining what constitutes as transsexual. Can we even make assumptions of one's gender identity and sexual orientation based on their appearance, clothing or physical behaviors or perhaps the tone of their voice? Having these dilemmas in mind, it can be argued that from bird's-eye view, the participants are not differentiating much from those in the Pride Parades and the participation of transsexuals is still few. Why would transsexual not participate in an event specifically organized for themselves?

I do not aim to answer all these questions in this section however, these are critical points to think about when analyzing Trans Pride activism. Although I have tried to conduct an interview with some Trans Pride activists, I was never able to, due to their unwillingness. However, I could manage to ask some of my questions to one of the activists from İstanbul LGBTI. One of the particularity and significance of Trans Pride she told, was its focus on hate crimes. The slogans and banners are more likely to address the issue of transsexual murders and hate crimes and police violence. Also sex work and the systematic violence sex workers are subjected to mostly by the government is a focal point of these parades. During the Trans Pride Week, panels subjecting these issues are carried out to make it more visible than those in the Pride Week's activities. Ferhat's ideas on this topic support this statement by saying that:

“Yes. Trans’ do need to produce something different. Although LGBTI Movement includes all these too but their voices could be unheard within Pride Parades. That’s why they need to organize as such. Compared to a gay and a lesbian, trans’ have more difficulties in terms of living spaces, everything taken from their hands, their doing a separate Pride is alright.”<sup>53</sup>

In a slightly different manner Serdar points to the need of a separate Trans Pride, concerned about the visibility issues of transsexuals within the movement itself:

“Everyone’s conjuncture are different. I mean this question sounded like why there is a March 8<sup>th</sup> parade. I mean despite the all-encompassment of the LGBTI, when I went to Lambda everyone was gay, the rest was unvoiced.”<sup>54</sup>

In most of my interviews, the informants have pointed out the visibility issues of certain sexual orientations and gender identities throughout the movement’s history. While Deniz, Serdar, Erdal and Cihan are pointing to the lacking of lesbians and transsexuals in the organizations during 2000’s, Yeşim and Ülkü were narrating the difficulties they had when they first tried to enter Lambda or Kaos GL. According to their testimonies most of the time these groups were mostly occupied by male homosexuals whereas bisexuality, transsexuality (either Trans women or Trans men) and lesbians were missing from the picture. I will talk more about the experiences of lesbian women within the movement in terms of encounters with feminism and LGBTI in the next chapter over its emotional dimensions. Yet, transsexual people’s encounters with LGBTI Movement as well as their social conditions in general are what seemed to pave the way to the organization of Trans Pride in 2009. Barış Sulu (an LGBTI activist) defines transsexuals as “the others of the LGBTI movement” (2013).

He reveals the problems that transsexual activists had with Kaos GL over the story of how Pembe Hayat organization was founded by the transsexual women. According to him, the conflicts were revolving around the norms and dominance of male homosexuality within the organization, even one of the trans activists were driven out of the organization because she

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<sup>53</sup> “Evet transların farklı bir şey yapmaları gerekiyor. LGBTİ Hareketi gerçi hepsini kapsıyor ama bir geye ve bir lezbiyene nazaran, yaşam alanları bakımından daha zorlandıkları için, her şeyi ellerinden alındığı için farklı bir pride yapmalarında sorun yok.”

<sup>54</sup> “Herkesin gündemi başka. Yani bu soru neden 8 Mart var demek gibi oldu. Yani LGBTI her şeyi kapsasa da ben Lambdaya gittiğimde herkes geydi. Gerisi söylenmiyordu.”

“couldn’t comply with the office codes, gay’s caprices and dressing codes” (Sulu, 2013:198). Although he does not talk explicitly about the specific problems and debates among trans activists and gay and lesbians, he mentions overall a culture of “madilik”. This term is significant to inquire the prejudices against and stereotypes of transsexual women in Turkey. It refers to one’s being overreacting and engaging in aggressive behaviors not only over the political issues but as a life style towards their immediate environment. In an event I have attended a couple of years ago in Lambdaİstanbul, this topic came to discussion and I recall that one of the transsexual participants in the room replied to the comments about “madilik” as; although it is becoming a way of stereotyping transsexual women, it also is embodied as a way of expression of/against the everyday violence and discrimination they are subjected to. However, within the LGBTI Movement’s organizational context, this has often been used as an excuse for their exclusion from the activist practices as it is also narrated by some of the participants.

Overall during the interview Belgin asserts that trans women have always been the most visible side of LGBTI in history not through its political activism but through the social and media depiction of transsexuals (especially those who are sex workers) as “the scum of society” and “worst form of social deviation”. Hence the current transphobia as a distinct form of homophobia is generated mostly through these images of transsexuals who could not live up to the gender ideals of the society and according to her, this has also reflected itself within the movement in terms of “intolerance against transsexuals”. Transphobia therefore is a term that implies “an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against people whose gender identities, appearances or behaviors deviate from social norms” (Serano, 2007:9). Though I am not very certain on the idea of irrationality of the fear against transsexuals due to the insinuation of homophobia and transphobia as psychological pathologies. So instead of pathologizing the violence and discrimination against LGBTI, I will prefer to use misogyny in terms of “emotional disgust towards individuals who do not conform to societies gender norms” (Chakrabarti & Garland, 2009:77). Although this could be a whole other subject of research, I find it useful to briefly explain my political choice of naming the hate as Homo-misogyny or Trans-misogyny. Trans-misogyny according to Serano (2007) is a form of hate through ridiculing and dismissing and victimizing those

whose expression and behaviors of femininity and femaleness deviates from the ideal heteronormativity.

Along with the social misogyny against transsexuals, Serano talks about those within the LGBTI organizations, especially within the lesbian groups and feminist organizations. As one of the most visible sites of this misogyny, she asserts, these groups tend to close their doors to transsexual women while opening them to transsexual men (Serano, 2007:10). I will talk about the trans men through Sinan's narrations later but on the part of in-movement trans-misogyny Belgin, based on her experiences in the early period of 2000's, tells that:

“Unfortunately, some gay and lesbian friends had transphobia against transsexuals, I saw that, also I lived that and cried. It was and still is there because there is a sex fight. Still there is. Even among transsexuals. I mean today a trans who don't have an (sex change) operation, accuses transsexuals (those who had sex change operation) disgustingly and grimly as 'eunuch' in a text I've read. She is also an activist! The marginal of marginalized always marginalize each other.”

#### **How did you experience this?**

“No need for the name but, a gay friend said 'dear Belgin Lambda is established for gays and lesbians'. It was over for me then! I left, but then I ran into a transsexual friend on the street and she convinced me to join back. What a paradox! You invite us to the meetings, we do things together but then this! The name is LGBT but see transsexuals...I mean don't niggle over it. When you take the T out, there can be LGB no problem! Let's not deal with the letters, let's look at those being said to me. These ears heard it.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “Malesef, bazı gey ve lezbiyen arkadaşların translara karşı transfobisi vardı, ben bunu gördüm ve hatta yaşadım, ağladım. Bu vardı ve hala da var çünkü bir cinsiyet kavgası var. Transların içinde de var. Yani bugün okuduğum bir yazıda, ameliyat olmayan bir trans, transseksüelleri tiksindirici bir şekilde ve gaddarca 'hadım' diye suçluyor. O da aktivist! Ötekinin ötekisi her zaman birbirini ötekiler.”

#### **Bunu nasıl deneyimledin?**

“İsim vermeye gerek yok, bir gey arkadaş 'Belgincim burası gey ve lezbiyenler için kuruldu' dedi bana. O an bitmişti benim için. Ayrıldım, sonra sokakta bir trans arkadaşla rastladım beni ikna etti tekrar ve tekrar katıldım. Bu ne çelişki! Bizi toplantılara davet ediyorsun, beraber bişeyler yapıyoruz sonra da bu! Adı LGBT ama işte translar...yani bununla uğraşma. Bu harflerle uğraşmayalım bana denilene bakalım. Bu kulaklar duydu onu.”

Perhaps one of the most discussed issue about this by my informants was over the Women Meetings started to be held at Lambdaİstanbul after they acquired their office in 2002. About the course and content of these meetings, Ülkü says that:

“We did these women’s meetings open only to the lesbians at first. Trans women insisted on participating too but the others (lesbians) wouldn’t feel so comfortable so... It started in 2004 or 2005 I can’t remember exactly but see we were deciding on certain topics with the women in Lambda and to talk about those things...so yeah those years they weren’t invited due to the reciprocal hesitations and prejudices then they also joined.”

**What were you discussing in those meetings and what were the reasons for you to organize it closed to transsexuals?**

“Well, coming out and some activist things you know. School life, work life... we were having conversations about what we’re experiencing. Not heavy topics but just to meet new people...by throwing balls to each other we were moderating so that everyone could talk. Because everyone was so hesitant and shy we made such decision of not inviting transsexuals at first years. We decided to take them in because we were not so much... you know vulnerable anymore I guess. I mean people were becoming more self-confident and wasn’t like afraid and ‘oh the transsexuals are coming so I won’t come’. If they (lesbians) were going to give up coming to those meetings, we decided not to invite (transsexuals) as a matter of priority. Because there were not many lesbians and it was for them to come and get them warmed up.”

**Did you ever encounter such an issue in Amargi?**

“Esmeray for instance was both in Lambda and Amargi and she wasn’t that much... you know... she was more acceptable. She wasn’t touching to people’s prejudices much, besides she had a feminist consciousness and a friend of Pınar (Selek). Those prejudices then was more like trans people are more tend to be aggressive and they were teasing other women like ‘we are more woman than you are’ like a contest due to the oppression they are subjected to and the unacceptance as a woman. Glances and those kind of things that we were catching...the women they see on the streets give a dirty look at them and perhaps, they were thinking we would be the same. This has passed fast but with Esmeray we didn’t experienced such things.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> “İlk başta bu toplantıları sadece kadınlara açık yaptık. Trans kadınlar da gelmek için ısrar ettiler ama bu sefer de diğerleri çok rahat hissetmez diye...2004 ya da 2005de başladı tam hatırlamıyorum ama işte Lambdada kadınlarla belli konulara karar veriyorduk ve konuşuyorduk...Yani evet o yıllarda onları davet etmedik bazı karşılıklı önyargılar ve çekinceler nedeniyle, sonraları onlar da katıldı.”

**Neler tartışıyordunuz o toplantılar? Bi de ne gibi nedenlerden ötürü translara kapalı yapma kararı aldınız?**

So these lesbian women's meetings were efficient in a way to get more women participant to the movement and in terms of socialization and building self-esteem by creating spaces of conversation and self-expression. However, Ülkü's narration reveals that the asserted misogyny against transsexual women was more about the lesbians and feminist women themselves and their prejudices as well as the transsexuals' manners towards them. Serano on this matter further states that "transphobia is first and foremost an expression of one's own insecurity about having to live up to cultural gender roles" (2007:9). Besides what Ülkü is telling about the feelings and the need of those years in terms of feminist groups' perception of transsexuals, lesbian socialization and community making practices, Belgin says:

"We are still talking with the language of organs but we are the two shitty ends of the same stick"<sup>57</sup>.

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"İşte açılma ve aktivist şeyler işte bildiğin gibi. Okul hayatı, iş hayatı...neler deneyimlediğimizle ilgili karşılıklı muhabbet ediyorduk. Çok ağır konular değil sadece yeni insanlarla tanışmak için falan...birbirimize top atarak modere ediyorduk ve herkesin konuşması sağlanıyordu böylece. İnsanlar çok çekingen ve utangaç olduğu için ilk yıllarda transları çağırmayalım diye bir karar aldık. Çağırmaya karar verdik sonra çünkü çok şey değildik artık...işte kırılğan sanırsam. İnsanlar daha kendilerine güvenli hale geldiler ve şey gibi değillerdi...korkup 'a translar geliyorsa ben gelmem'. Onlar gelmekten vazgeçecekselelerdi, öncelik olarak translara gelmeyin dedik. Çünkü çok lezbiyen yoktu ve bu onların gelmesini sağlamak ve ısıtırmak içindi."

### **Amargide böyle bir sorunla karşılaştınız mı hiç?**

"Ya örneğin Esmeray hem Lambda hem Amargi'deydi ve hani çok da...bilirsin...daha kabullenilebilirdi. İnsanların önyargılarına çok da dokunmuyordu, feminist bilinci vardı ve Pınar'ın arkadaşıydı. Bu önyargılar o zamanlar şeydi, işte translar daha agresif olabiliyor, bi de diğer kadınlara 'biz sizden daha kadınız' diye sataşıyorlardı, işte önyargılar ve kadın olarak kabul edilmediklerinden ötürü, sanki bir yarışmış gibi. Süzmelerini falan öyle şeyleri yakalıyorduk. Sokakta kendilerini gören kadınlar kötü başıklar atıyor onlara ve sanırsam biz de öyleyiz diye düşünüyorlardı. Esmerayda bu durum çabuk geçti ve bu tür sorunlar yaşamadık."

<sup>57</sup> "Organların diliyle konuşuyoruz hala ama aynı deyneğin iki boklu ucuyuz"

The language she vividly expressed is of penis and vagina, was actually the conceptualization of politics and community making practices according to the genital differences in those first years' women's activities. After telling me a story of hers about an aggressive encounter with a feminist over what a real woman is or not during one of the Amargi meetings which ended up with her leaving Amargi; the main criticism there was despite the crushing experience of womanhood in Turkey, one cannot singularize those experiences based on the biological terms. In other words, transsexual, lesbian and bisexual women are all encountering the violence and discrimination based on their conduct of femaleness and femininity. Although these encounters might be experienced in distinct ways and amounts, I believe it would be fair to state that the common point of departure for forming the politics cannot bear such discrimination; rather it should've been more eligible for different forms of femininity and femaleness to coexist and to be discussed and to produce activism upon as it is observable more now.

On the other side of the issue there were transsexual men. Having almost no knowledge about trans men for the first 15 years of the movement; their visibility was not even debated or acted upon. Sinan narrates the period between 2000 and 2007 as:

“There wasn't a group of trans men until then. There was more of an organization around trans women and lesbians. Trans men were going to the rehab groups at Çapa that I know. But there wasn't anything done for that. Then we came out and some joined but they were coming mostly to come out and socialize and eventually fit into the society. I mean there wasn't much of a political action. There was Ali Gül though. Then we have formed Voltrans in 2007. Since then we are partaking in Trans Pride and Pride Parade.<sup>58</sup>

For all my informants Ali Gül (who has passed away a few years ago due to natural causes) was the first trans man they have ever encountered until then. Yeşim and Cihan emphasize that Ali Gül was mostly known as a lesbian women both because his own struggles with

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<sup>58</sup> “O zamana kadar trans erkekler olarak bir grup yok. Daha çok trans kadınlar ve lezbiyenler üzerinden bir örgütlenme vardı. Trans erkekler Çapa'daki rehabilitasyon gruplarına gidiyorlardı onu biliyordum bir tek. Ama buna dair pek de bişey yapılmıyordu. Sonraları açıldık gelenler oldu ama daha çok açılma ve dönüşüm sürecini tamamlamak ve başkalarıyla tanışmak sonra da topluma karışmak için geliyordu insanlar. Yani öyle siyasi aktivite pek yoktu. Gerçi Ali Gül vardı. Sonra da işte Voltransı kurduk ve o zamandan beridir Trans pride ve Pride yürüyüşlerine katılıyoruz.”

coming out and the others' lack of knowledge on trans men that they would not even think of someone being a trans man. In a panel at Boğaziçi University in 2010, Ali presents his experiences along with the formation of Turkey's first trans men group:

“(After joining Lambdaİstanbul) I was living the empowerment and the comfort only over my attraction to women. Something was missing. Neither in Lambdaİstanbul nor around me had I thought I haven't seen anyone like me because none of us knew concepts such as transgender man or transsexual man. Moreover, we were inviting those who we thought 'woman' to the women's meeting. Naturally if that person never defined themselves as a woman; was not coming again...” (Arıkan, 2013:55)

In 2007 after two other people came out as trans men, three of them initiated a group called Voltrans in order to:

“To try to find answers to the questions in our heads, to share experiences, to act with solidarity, to break the trans male invisibility...we came together. After a while, we organized talks and panels, exhibitions, video screenings, performances at the Day against Homophobia and Pride Weeks.” (Arıkan, 2013:61)

These narratives of trans-misogyny and debates around transsexuality along with the invisibility of trans-men within the LGBTI Movement in Turkey have challenged the political discourse of *onur* that, as my research participants have indicated, assertedly silences and even excludes transsexuals within LGBTI activism. Trans pride is not necessarily referring to a different discourse within LGBTI politics in Turkey, however it reconfigures and reformulates *onur* in a way to bring a more qualified definition. Based on my observations, the term *trans onuru* (trans pride) is used in a more tangible and audible manner to highlight the systematic, structural and cultural violence and discrimination against transsexuals in Turkey. Therefore Trans Pride activism covers a sphere of politics for those whose existence for a long time was not even considered as trans men as well as politics against perhaps the most visible and frequent form of violence towards LGBTI's that is trans-misogyny in a more organized and framed manner. Instead of considering it as a total reaction solely to the silencing effect of Pride Weeks and LGBTI activism in general, the subjectivities and contexts of transsexuals in Turkey are the defining tenets of the need for a separate series of events called Trans Pride Week and Parade.

## 2.6. Gezi Resistance and Its Impact on 2013 Pride Parade

Another peak point in the history of Pride activism as my informants have indicated is 2013 Pride Parade. In May 27<sup>th</sup> the government has started applying its urban gentrification project on Gezi Park Taksim in İstanbul. Being a prominent site of policies of the governing party, Justice and Development Party, urban transformation practices were going on a mass scale for the last years especially in İstanbul in the areas where mostly populated by the marginalized segments of the society. This time in Gezi Park, with the first hit of the backhoe loader against the trees in the park, LGBTI groups, as one of the first ones, have rushed into the field and started protesting. Later towards the 30<sup>th</sup> of May the first crushing encounter with the police has happened and people have witnessed an enormously uneven police attacks and violence against the protesters. Through the course of the later weeks towards the end of June, Gezi park protests have become a Turkey-wide phenomenon, having led thousands of people in various cities to practice civil disobedience, resistance against government and the police force and to experience a communal life in the park area for a while. However, what was the reason of such an immediate reaction to the destruction of a relatively small green area in the middle of the city center? For many, it was the unbearable destruction of green areas not only in the countryside but also in the city where green is yet a rare color to be found. For some it was solely about confronting JDP and its political ideology in terms of neoliberalism and conservatism and for others it was basically a matter of empathy and realization of the terror that government is able to inflict upon its own citizens. These are the reasons that I could remember from my experiences during Gezi resistance however for the LGBTI groups who most actively carried on the politics, manual labor and the organization of the resistance from the beginning, there was another reason besides these ones, at least for some.

Having faced with the same policies but different processes in Ülker Sokak<sup>59</sup> in 1996 and in Tarlabası through the 2010's and in many other districts of Beyoğlu, Aksaray in İstanbul and Eryaman in Ankara; transsexual women were one of those marginalized groups. Deprived off their livelihood as citizens in terms of jobs, education, health, accommodation

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<sup>59</sup> For more information, see: Selek Pınar, 2011. *Maskeler, Süvariler, Gacılar – Ülker Sokak: Bir Alt Kültürün Dışlanma Mekanı*. Ayizi Kitap. İstanbul

and security; public parks and highways have always been spaces of sex work where they find customers.

Since 1990's highways, as the media focuses on when there is a transsexual arrest case, have become too open to be assaulted and arrested by the police so the parks especially during the night provided unseen, relatively more protected sites from the police gaze for these sex workers to actually sustain their life. Gezi Park was one of them and perhaps the last one in what could be considered as the city center where their likelihood of finding a customer increases. Not only it has an economic side for transsexuals, for LGBTI Movement in general the resistance against the destruction of these spaces could mean the decreasing number of sites where LGBTI's could exist vis-à-vis the marginalization. Although I do not insinuate any sort of generalization that this was the reason LGBTI's were resisting and struggling against the police, the impact of these gentrification processes on the livelihood of transsexuals cannot be underestimated in terms of LGBTI politics in Turkey. In this conjuncture, one week after the police had brutally broken the resistance and driven people out of the park Pride Parade took place at İstiklal and it was the most crowded parade ever organized by the LGBTI activists. Yeşim narrates this experience as:

“One or two weeks before Gezi resistance, police did not allow any press statements and gassed them all in Taksim for the whole May. Once, this is something they wouldn't do normally, there is no such thing. Nothing happens for years I mean...So when we saw them, we got anxious as ‘God! We won't be able to walk this year, what are we going to do?’ and we did many meetings with different social groups over how to avoid this. I mean over the ways that would make us able to walk there. Then Gezi resistance happened and we were like ‘aww why did you bother for us.’”<sup>60</sup>

The possibility of Pride Parade to be carried out despite the police brutality in 2013 was, as Yeşim points out, an outcome of Gezi resistance and the strengthening affinities between other participant groups in the protests and the new relations built with what would otherwise

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<sup>60</sup> “Gezi direnişinden bir iki hafta önce bütün Mayıs ayı boyunca polis Taksim’de basın açıklamalarına izin vermedi hepsini gazladı. Bir kere normalde yapmadıkları bişey, böyle bişi yok, yıllardır hiç bişey olmaz yani. Onları görünce ‘Allah! Biz bu sene yürüyemicez, napcaz?’ gibisinden kaygılandık ve farklı toplumsal gruplarla görüşmeler yaptık bunun olmasını nasıl engelleriz üzerinden. Sonra Gezi direnişi oldu ve biz ‘ya bizim için ne zahmet ettiniz ya’ olduk.”

be unlikely. One of those groups whose possibility of relating with LGBTI politics is less likely was Çarşı, a football fan organization that is mostly identified with masculine men, whose manners of protest was through swearing and shouting sexist and militarist slogans which targets mostly LGBTI's and women. Çelebi states that "we have become more visible as political subjects through the years of feminist and LGBTI struggle" (Çelebi, 2013:46). The immediate function the political accumulation of feminist and LGBTI movement during Gezi resistance have showed itself in forms of direct reaction, intervention and instantaneous reflex to these sexist and militarist instances. Thinking in the same line Ülkü comments on these protests (though she was not a participant):

"Homosexuals as a group resistant to the oppression has gained their respect. Especially feminists and LGBTI's there, have found a chance to confront the sexist and female-misogynous discourse. I mean, people resisted not only against the government but also against the discrimination within us."<sup>61</sup>

On the matter of the pragmatic results and the political outcomes of Gezi to Pride Parade of 2013; Ferhat, as an activist who was a member of the organizing committee of the Pride Week that year and a participant at the LGBTI Block in the Gezi Park, narrates his experiences as follows:

"Gezi affected Pride a lot. Especially the joining of the Çarşı group along with the other groups have created a density. After a period such as Gezi, it was the first time a parade was being done...It was a very short period to organize. We, meanwhile, couldn't carry out both the Gezi and the Pride Week meetings. They were tried to be held in the park; all that rush... We all died. We were both taking responsibility as LGBTI Block and Pride Week committee. Where the flags, panel site, speakers, and rush there are rush here...it forced a lot but pulled together. But the theme suit so well. We said 'let's make the theme Resistance' before Gezi and it fit well."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>"Eşcinseller baskıya dayanıklı bir grup olarak onların saygısını kazandı orada. Özellikle feministler ve lgbtiler orada cinsiyetçi ve kadın düşmanı söyleme müdahale etme şansı yakaladılar. Yani sadece iktidara karşı değil içimizdeki ayrımcılığa karşı da direnildi orada."

<sup>62</sup> "Organizasyon açısından çok kısa bir dönemdi. Biz orada hem Gezi hem de Onu Haftası toplantılarını beraber yürütemedik. Parkta yapılmaya çalışıldı, koşuşturmacalar... Hani öldük hepimiz. Hem LGBTI Blok hem de Onur haftası komitesi olarak görev alıyorduk. Bayraklar nerde, panel yeri, konuşmacılar, oraya koştur buraya koştur...Baya zorladı ama toparlandı. Ama tema çok denk geldi. Biz Gezi öncesinde 'Direniş yapalım' demiştik Gezi cuk oturdu."

Consisted of almost one hundred thousand participants, that years Pride Parade was considered as not only the biggest parade in Turkey but also the biggest Pride Parade in Europe. Almost all of my informants have emphasized this in an excitement yet Serdar was rather calm and cynical to these kind of attributions to 2013 Pride Parade:

“That crowd there was not that much of an extreme condition. When you look at the parade quantitatively, that crowd there was rather a continuation of the history. That crowd would be even if Gezi didn’t happen. Well perhaps we can talk about a contribution as the intensification of the non-trans and non-homosexual groups’ participation. Yet even this hasn’t started with people participating in Gezi. A lot of different groups were already participating. Ha perhaps Gezi only brought a difference to the character of the environment. That is, this parade being the first one after driving people out of the park. People had shouted like ‘Damn you Tayyip!’ as well as ‘We Are Here, We are Queer’. These two got nested. That was the spirit of the time.”<sup>63</sup>

This sounded rather interesting to me. There is an eleven years of experience behind the development of the Pride activism in terms of the increasing numbers of its participants and the issues being addressed such as anti-militarism, feminism, hate crimes, work rights and so on. Hence, ascribing the contribution of Gezi to the Pride Parades as a very distinct, unexpected and unimaginable generation of politics of a particular context, would, to some extent, undermine the eleven years of activism behind it.

However, the nestedness off different forms of political attachments as Serdar mentioned, did bring out a different phase in realization of Pride Parades. The channeling of political discourses such as “This is just a beginning, continue resistance” or “Resist Ayol<sup>64</sup>” from

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<sup>63</sup>“Oradaki kalabalık extreme bir durum değildi. Yürüyüşün niceliksel olarak tarihine bakarsan o kalabalık bir nevi tarihin devamı. Gezi olmasa da o kalabalık olurdu. Yani belki şuraya bir katkısı oldu diyebiliriz; natrans ve eşcinsel olmayan grupların katılımı yoğunlaştı. Ama bu bile insanların Geziye katılmasıyla başlamadı. Bir sürü farklı grup aktılıyordu zaten. Ha belki sadece ortamın karakterine bir farklılık getirdi. O da bu yürüyüşün parkı dağıtılmasından sonra ilk yürüyüş olmasıydı. İnsanlar ‘Kahrol Tayyip’ diye de slogan attılar, ‘Eşcinseliz burdayız’ da dediler. Bunların ikisi birbirine girdi. Zamanın ruhu oydu.”

<sup>64</sup>“Ayol” is very frequently used phrase during Pride Parades in Turkey. Its social connotations are basically about being effeminate and moreover being a flirtatious woman. Hence when a male says Ayol, he is directly identified as gay, and moreover a flamboyant gay. This socially marginalizing attribution over the use of such a phrase, has been taken as a political standpoint during the Pride Parades. By adding Ayol to what is conventionally

Gezi resistance to Pride Parade right after, has uplifted the understanding of this political action's importance as its being a major site of LGBTI politics as my informants have expressed about the first years of the parades. 2013 and 2014 Pride Weeks and Pride Parades, therefore, have practically intensified the transformation of this arena into spheres of this connectedness and engagement with different sites of politics as well as different political groups.

### **2.7. The First Attack: Spreading Politics, Violent Responses**

Lastly, in 2015, police intervened the Pride Parade which took place in Taksim uneventfully for the last 13 years and attacked the protesters with water cannons and tear gas without any prior warning. The parade could not take place as planned and ended up with a brief press statement and a police attack later on. As a reason for the prohibition and the attack, İstanbul governorate showed its coinciding with Ramadan which would allegedly 'disturb the society'. However the previous year's Pride Parade also coincided with Ramadan and no such atrocity happened.

As a disappointed and furious participant, the first thing I have observed was the unreadiness of the participants who have gained such an experience of resistance during Gezi; on the field. Although the activists and politicians have raised voices to these atrocities later on through going to the court and making press statements; the reason for an ineffective immediate resistance was perhaps we were unready and not expecting such an attack.

Despite the fact that the reason is depicted as the coincidence of Ramadan and Pride Parade, it is important to emphasize that this event is about the point the LGBTI Movement has reached. LGBTI's increasing political visibility and activism; including being at the front lines of a social upheaval like Gezi, the committed activism carried out against the hate crimes and discrimination for almost 25 years and initiatives to partake in local and national politics through elections, present candidates and increasing efforts towards pushing LGBTI

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assumed as masculine (like resistance and revolution as in 'Devrim Ayol') act breaks its marginilizing dimensions in a satirical manner.

agenda into the national and local political arena through HDP and CHP<sup>65</sup>, and inviting parliamentarians to sign the “LGBTI in the Parliament” contract signed by 61 parliamentarian candidates from various political parties for 2015 general elections.

All these, I believe have demonstrated that a social group, LGBTI’s, which is considered as apolitical, frivolous and most of all invisible, could actually intervene and challenge both the social life and politics. Realization of such a challenge by the government is also possible through observing the proliferation of Pride activism across Turkey. For the last two years, Pride Weeks and Pride Parades are being organized and becoming popularized in various cities such as İzmir, Bursa, Denizli and Mersin. The spreading LGBTI activism in turn, have exhibited the reality that we are everywhere and we are a lot.

As I have framed the 25 years of practical and conceptual development of Pride activism in Turkey, I argue that these developments, memories and comments on the movement’s conjuncture is often expressed through aligning them with a feeling. Be it fear, senses of freedom, anxiety, motivation or excitement, many feelings arouse from the experience of a marginalized sexuality and gender identity. In the next chapter, I discuss these emotional dimensions of LGBTI activism in Turkey and Pride activism in particular.

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<sup>65</sup> People’s Democratic Party (HDP) and Republican People’s Party (CHP)

## CHAPTER 3:

### EMOTIONS AND PRIDE ACTIVISM

“Emotional spaces are those in which identities are negotiated, constructed and possibly transformed, righteous anger, pain and frustration are expressed; hopes and aspirations are pursued” says Barnes (2012:23). Tracing emotions and feelings related to Pride activism, during my fieldwork, has enthused me to the variety of the emotional expressions in terms of narrating how Pride Parades feel like. Providing an opportunity for certain emotions to erupt such as excitement, solidarity, nervousness and joy and for others to alleviate such as fear and anxiety; Pride Parades create a space for LGBTI’s to imagine and perform a queer futurity. In this chapter, I will try to exhibit how the concept of *onur* becomes a discourse of mobilization through addressing certain emotions such as solidarity, motivation, anger, community feelings, enthusiasm, feelings related to equality and justice vis-à-vis the everyday violence and the emotions that purports such as fear, hesitation, shame and so on. I will try to frame these emotions together in the notion of “emotional habitus” borrowing from Deborah Gould to indicate how individually expressed and varying emotions are creating the mobilizing structures of LGBTI Movement in Turkey through discourses of *onur*. Through such an articulation, *onur* can be related to collective emotions and Pride Parades can be considered as spaces where these emotions pave the way for collective mobilization. Therefore, I aim to address both to the personal narratives of my research participants and their collective connotations in a small scale. However I will also indulge into the critical

questioning of the discursive power of *onur* by questioning what kind of emotions it includes and excludes. Also I will inquire what kind of subjective bases political activism is formed and how that affects the formation of “emotional habitus” related to Pride activism.

Prior to my fieldwork I was preoccupied with the idea of an emotional transformation that LGBTI activism perpetuates in terms of people’s emotional states. How is shame transformed into pride? What are the ways to eradicate fear and accelerate motivation? Which activities paves the way for people to feel less lonely and more in solidarity? Having these questions in mind, my fieldwork revealed to me that transformation is yet an assertive word for the workings of emotions in the LGBTI activism in Turkey. Instead of transformation, the everyday discomfort that heteronormative society imposes along with the comfort Pride Parades provide even for a moment, is what structures the emotional dimension of Pride activism in Turkey. Therefore I focus on the simultaneity of contradictory feelings that occurs both during the parades and through the organization of them. This chapter is mainly formed around the questions regarding the emotional dimensions of LGBTI activism in Turkey. How the notion of Pride is emotionally charged through political activism? Furthermore, what are the components of the practices of Pride activism? Through these questions I discuss the political capacities and discursive potentials of seemingly contradicting emotional states in which Gould conceptualizes as ‘Emotional Habitus’ of LGBTI communities.

### **3.1. What is ‘Emotional Habitus’? And The Subjective Bases of Activism**

‘Emotional Habitus’ generally defines the “social groups’ collective and partially conscious emotional dispositions, that is members’ embodied, axiomatic inclinations towards certain feelings and ways of emoting”, borrowing from Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ (Gould, 2009:32). If our emotional habitus defines, not necessarily consciously, ways of political and social action and ways of thinking, how can a group of people who are “oriented” to feel shame, fear and the need to hide their sexuality, pursue political action against these forms of feelings? What changes the way people generically respond to these emotions that can be identified as “negative”? How is the transformation of these negative emotions into positive ones such as pride or is there ever a transformation?

Although he never explicitly refers to the emotional dynamics of habitus or forms of capital, Bourdieu (1990) states that habitus becomes definitive in terms of providing certain orientations for people to act. Habitus is the combination of the resources and types of capitals one has such as cultural, social, financial and symbolic. Diane Reay, scrutinizing on Bourdieu's forms of capital, theorizes emotional capital and argues that "emotional capital is generally confined within the bounds of affective relationships of family and friends and encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about" (2004:60). Following Novotny (in Reay, 2004:61) emotional capital encapsulates "knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterized at least by affective ties". (Novotny, 1981:148). What are the emotional capital of LGBTI activists? What kind of emotional ties are turned into an asset in LGBTI activism in order to survive within the group and pursue political action? What kind of factors elevate people to call themselves activists? How is habitus functioning in people's decision to pursue activism?

Throughout the interviews, the participants gave various different answers to these questions. As my fieldwork progressed, I came to understand that trying to understand who call themselves an activist and why, is a matter of feelings related to belonging and attachments together with socialization and dissidence against social oppression which blurred the lines that I had drawn for myself prior to the research. Based on my engagement with LGBTI Movement prior to this research, I used to define and see activism in terms of the amount of time spent in the organization of an activity or an event or in terms of belonging to a group or organization to pursue political action. Hence, for a long time I have struggled with the idea of exclusion from the activist spheres due to my withdrawal from the organizational political actions in 2011. Since then, this research created an opportunity for me to build a space for discussion and conceptualization based on the participants' definitions of activism as well as their processes of becoming activist.

Socialization seemed to be the most repeated reason as well as the outcome of activist engagements with the movement however the process of socialization happened differently for each of the participants due to their emotional, social and financial capital. Raey (2004) discusses that emotional capital is related to other forms of capital Bourdieu is formalizing, especially to social, cultural and symbolic capital. Social capital is basically the networks

gained through social processes starting from the family to the wider society (Bourdieu, 1985). None of the Bourdieu's concepts of capitals are gendered or has a sexual basis; however, thinking especially on the social capital, I can assert that, within a heterosexist social setting, the networks one establishes and gains are mostly defined through the same heterosexist conduct.

I would like to open up a parenthesis here to speculate on the relationship of emotional capital and social capital. Emotional capital as I have indicated above is about how one feels about themselves as well as how one evaluates and responds to others' emotions which characterize the sociality of one's environment. In a heterosexist social setting one's emotional capital could occur as the comfort and feelings related to 'normality'. However, deviating from the heterosexual socialization, coming out or self-awareness of one's own sexual orientation, may elevate negative emotions such as shame, secrecy, discomfort and anxiety. Hence the emotional capital related to being in a heterosexist social environment might manifest as these negative emotions, which in return sustains one's place in family and wider society. So what happens when an individual decides to come out and pursue politics of LGBTI? What kind of alterations or transformations occur within the emotional capital which is determinant in one's social capital?

Coming out and reaching to others seem to be the first step in these transformation of the emotional capital within the heterosexual sociality. Most of the participants in this research mentioned socialization, through coming out and attending to the events and organizations, has changed their ways of emoting about their immediate environment as well as themselves. Yeşim narrates that until she came out to herself and then built a contact with Kaos GL in her undergraduate years, she thought she was the only woman who is feeling attractions to other women. Feelings of loneliness and secrecy has changed through her attending to Kaos GL activities towards feelings of community and collectivity. For Cihan, establishing a relationship with Lambdaİstanbul created the feelings of serving to a purpose or as he narrates:

“I was out to myself and some friends around me but it was just that, then I went to Güzistanbul heard about it from a friend and I started feeling like I could do something here, I kind of grew that ego.”<sup>66</sup>

Serdar on the other hand particularly talks about how the feelings of socialization, making friends, finding lovers, sex partners, having parties, reading groups during his engagement with LEGATO in his undergraduate years, have helped him to establish networks, a social environment even today. However, in terms of emotional capital, although engagement with the LGBTI groups and politics helped these people to transform their ways of emoting about themselves and building relationships with others in accordance, Serdar’s case has a significance in terms of family environment. He narrates that he never had a conflict with his family throughout his coming out process that his parents were understanding and accepting if not supporting. Feeling confident and relatively safe about his sexuality, Serdar’s relationship with LGBTI politics came to heighten his ambitions to pursue LGBTI rights advocacy. However, about group forming and his perceptions over Lambdaİstanbul then is indicating how one’s senses of solidarity and socialization is also dependent on one’s cultural capital that is the class dispositions, ways of thinking and manners together with social behaviors one embodies. He tells that;

“Lambda then, was not that open to public and not a place where people would go with great eagerness. It was different in LEGATO. I mean, university students, more of a middle, upper middle class people were in. Lambda didn’t have that charisma. When you go Lambda’s meetings, there were these weird people. There was this sort of...not elitism but I mean, LEGATO was more homogenous because all of us were university students and around the same ages. But when you go to Lambda you could see different people. A transvestite came from Anatolia, a very old gay guy...I mean when you encounter these people for the first time, you can’t help but grow a transphobia and homophobia.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> “Kendime ve etrafımda birkaç arkadaşına açtım ama o kadardı. Sonra bir arkadaştan duydum, Güzİstanbul’a gittim ve ben burda bişeyler yaparım dedim, yani öyle bir ego gelişti.”

<sup>67</sup> Lambda o zamanlar halka açık ve insanların çok istekli gitmek isteyeceği bir yer değildi. LEGATO farklıydı, yani işte üniversite öğrencileri, orta-üst sınıf insanlar vardı. Lambda’nın bu karizması yoktu. Lambda toplantılarına gittiğim böyle garip insanlar vardı. Yani böyle elitizm değil ama, LEGATO daha homojendi. Çünkü hepimiz üniversite öğrencileriydik ve aynı yaşıydık. Fakat Lambda’ya gittiğin zaman farklı farklı insanlar görebilirdin. İşte Anadolu’dan gelmiş bir travesti, çok yaşlı bir gey adam. Yani bu insanlarla ilk defa karşılaşınca ister istemez bir transfobi ve homofobi geliştiriyorsun

Also the emotional capital LGBTI activism purports and transforms in terms of solidarity, group feeling, and socialization came out to be very much related with the symbolic capital that refers to the knowledge, merits and prestige one has. Cihan expresses his experiences when he first attended to Lambdaİstanbul meetings and people's reactions. He says that people had come to him asking how he knew things about organizing an event, telling him that he sounds like someone who is experienced in these sort of organizational matters. He admits that his previous engagements with leftist organizations in his university had helped him to see what could be done in Lambdaİstanbul in terms of carrying out political activism and this has attracted people's attention. Also, Deniz's former relations with socialist and anarchist organizations have been very influential especially during the anti-war demonstrations in 2003 as he articulates. The senses of being useful and influencing based on the knowledge and experience are what ensures these people's attachment and commitment to their organizations as well as LGBTI sociality.

On the other side, the interviews revealed to me that, financial capital is very crucial element in one's attachments to LGBTI activism. I believe this is a very crucial element in terms of forming a community and establishing the emotions of belonging, commitment, solidarity and socialization. Yeşim states that:

“I mean yes, it was we encourage people to come here. But on the other hand, there is a financial side of activism. Coming to the organization a couple days of week, spending time here, transportation money plus food money, then getting out to socialize with drinking etc... Not everyone can afford these and as a result it affects the number of people coming to Lambda. It requires a certain amount of money for one from Aksaray to come to Kadıköy three days a week. When you can't come here regularly after a while you don't come at all.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Yani evet insanların buraya gelmesi iyi ve teşvik etmeye çalıştığımız bir şey ama diğer taraftan aktivizmin parasal bir yanı da var. Haftanın bir kaç günü derneğe gelmek, burada vakit geçirmek yol parası artı yemek parası, sonra çıkıp sosyalleşelim derken içki parası falan... Herkes bunları karşılayamıyor, bu da sonuçta Lambda'ya gelip giden insan sayısında etkili oluyor. Aksaraydaki bir insanın haftanın 3 günü Kadıköy'e gelmesi demek belli bir harcama demek. Buraya sürekli gelemeyince de bir şeylerden uzak kalmış oluyorsun, bir süre sonra da gelmeyi bırakıyorsun.

Apart from these, there is also, what I would like to call as, “physical capital” meaning the bodily dispositions, clothing, style and physical appearance being determinant in one’s emotional capital formed within LGBTI activist context. The libidinal energy within the activist environment, I can assert is a sub-factor in one’s attachment to the group and the feelings that attachment generates. Serdar mentions that many people were following LEGATO’s events and participating in the organization of those events to find a partner, love or sexual relationships. Similarly, Cihan tells that;

“Well, having known something (about organizations) have affected participation there but at the same time there was sexual attraction. I mean they were treating me well. There wasn’t this much interest in everyone coming there then people were getting bored and leave. I mean I was liking flirting, I didn’t feel lonely. But of course this was more like a nuanced thing, it wasn’t THE reason.”<sup>69</sup>

And he continues that:

“Kaos<sup>70</sup> is a different story but in Lambda’s environment you might feel belonging (to political activism) based on your coincidental features. Social/friendship relations, going out for a drink together, being together at the parties etc. To have time to take responsibility, social statue and class, being a student... For instance, even now it is a big problem for Lambda. I mean ok you think you try to create a very open social space but homosexual workers living in Bağcılar cannot socialize with you because it requires a whole lot of time to join your group. Those people don’t have time they cannot come to your meetings in the midweek. We were discussing these about women as well, whether to change the time of the meetings because women might not be able to come at 8 pm during the week days. Then women took initiative and organized themselves. However it is still about class, statue, socialization, even physical appearance... I mean there is something like this now; Lambda is open to everyone and there are a lot of socially wounded people going there. Silenced, hesitant, not able to speak, not able to express themselves... I mean you cannot socialize with them. They cannot hold on to that. Nobody talks to them and they don’t come afterwards. This can partly be about the appearance as well. That setting is not that democratic. For example, Z is from a middle class family, who can work

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<sup>69</sup> Ya benim bir şeyler biliyor olmam etkili oldu orada kalmamda ama aynı zamanda cinsel bir çekim de vardı ortamda. Yani bana iyi davranıyorlardı, her gelene bu kadar ilgili olunmuyordu, sonra sıkılıp gidiyordu insanlar. Yani o yazma refleksleri falan çok hoşuma gidiyordu, hani kendimi çok yalnız hissetmedim. Ama tabi bu daha nüans olarak, böyle tam bu nedenle diye değil orada olmam.

<sup>70</sup> I leave Kaos outside of this analysis due to my field focus on İstanbul, hence this study limited in terms of representativeness.

freelance; A is from an upper middle class family or Y is a professional, earning money and can afford it. The rest is generally are students and for some that is the only social environment for them. Lambda then can be considered as a place where people who have these coincidental features or for those who can speak fast and loud.”<sup>71</sup>

These narratives and statements are indicating that as the emotional habitus of the political activism emerges and develops based on the feelings related to community making, socialization, solidarity, motivation and also in a “nuanced” manner “sexual attraction”, the exclusion occurs perhaps not on the different emotional levels but on the bases of social class, statue and gender.

In addition to these arguments towards the emotional capital of the movement and how it is generated through different subjectivities; the participants were able to make a general statement on what means to be an activist. Deniz, Yeşim and Cihan were emphasizing that the term activism was started to be used later in the course of LGBTI Movement around the second half of the 2000’s. Especially Cihan and Yeşim narrated the tensions around calling

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<sup>71</sup> Kaosta başka bir hikaye var – ama Lambda gibi bir ortamda bir senin tesadüfi özelliklerinden dolayı orda bir grup içi kabulü hissetmen gerekiyor, arkadaşlık ilişkileri sosyal, beraber içmeye gitmeler partide beraber olmalar falan filan. Sorumluluk alacak zamanının olması, sosyal ve sınıfsal statün...öğrenci olman. Mesela şuanda Lambdada hala büyük bir sıkıntı - hala daha onları anlatmaya çalışıyoruz – yani tamam siz çok açık bir sosyal ortam yarattığınızı zannediyorsunuz ama Bağcılarda yaşayan eşcinsel işçiler sizinle sosyalleşemiyor çünkü sizin grubunuza katılmak için deli gibi boş zaman gerekiyor. O insanların öyle zamanları yokki hafta arası senin toplantına gelemiyorlar. Biz bunu kadınlarla da ilgili konuşuyorduk hani hafta içi saat 8de toplantı yapınca kadınlar gelemiyor değiştirsek mi falan diye. Sonra kadınlar kendileri bi şekilde insiyatif aldılar kendi kendilerine örgütlendiler ama yani şu anda da hala sınıfsal statü, sosyalişte dış görünüş hatta... Yani şimdi şöyle bir şey var hani Lambda bu kadar insana açık ve bi sürü toplumsal olarak yaralı insan oraya gidiyor. Susmuş sinmiş çekingen konuşamayan kendini ifade edemeyen...yani o insanlarla sen arkadaş olamazsın yani onumuyor sen beraber takılamzsın. Çocuk tutunamıyor gidiyor orda kimse onunla konuşmuyor ondan sonra gelmiyor hani. Yani bu kısmen dış görünüş de olabilir. O kadar da demokratik değil yani o kurgu. Mesela Öner devamlı freelance çalışabilen orta sınıf bir ailenin çocuğu, Cihan orta sınıf bir ailenin çocuğu yani orta üst hatta. Yeşim profesyonel çalışıyor para kazanıyor, zamanı olduğunda deli gibi çalışır zamanı olmadığında bir kaç ay Lambdaya hiç uğramaz belki Lambda ona izin verir. Genellikle diğerleri öğrenci, bir kısım içinde gerçekten başka sosyal çevresi yok yani bunun üzerine kurmuş. Lambdada böyle eskaza tesadüfen, genelde çok böyle zıpçıktı hani orayada laf sokan buraya da laf sokan tiplerin tutunabildiği, kişisel özelliklere bağlı bu tarz insanlar kalıyor

oneself activist because according to the debates going on back then, the term activist was too conventionalized for people who just want to have their own word in their lives, claiming their identity. Cihan adds to that, there should be some sort of differentiation between someone who spends their lot of time to this cause and those who only passes by. For Deniz and Serdar activism had always been a matter of everyday life, an individual matter as well as collective. The reactions you give to the oppressive immediate surrounding for Deniz and just to claim your existence by coming out without necessarily being political for Serdar is considered as being an activist. However, Ülkü asserts that activism has always been associated with the degree of visibility of one to the others in terms of sexuality and gender identity as the more you're visible the more activist you are. She adds that for this reason she has never seen herself as an activist in LGBTI politics since she was too anxious to come out. On the other hand for Belgin, activism starts with the 'birth' for transsexuals and she states that it is the life of the transsexuals.

The reason I wanted to speculate and indicate the relationship of emotional capital and the other forms of capital that forms one's habitus is because I believe that they are becoming determinant in one's attachment to political activism. However I would like to take a moment here to argue that despite the seemingly durability of habitus, I take identity as a fluid concept which (trans)forms itself collectively. In other words, these forms of capitals which are determinant in one's habitus have the possibility of being subjected to change. This is what, I believe explain Serdar's attachment to Lambdaİstanbul after he left LEGATO as he told me during our conversation despite his former perspective towards Lambdaİstanbul. Bourdieu explains that "...the habitus which at every moment, structures new experiences, in accordance with the structures produced by the past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences..." (1990:60). Activism then, presents a multi-dimensional formation in a way that the emotionality of LGBTI politics cannot be theorized without considering one's habitus that is evaluated through their social, financial, cultural and symbolic capital, not in a durable way but as a fluid concept. In that case, emotional capital, both in heterosexist setting and LGBTI political sociality is an important factor in and resonating one's emotional habitus. Now, let us focus on what consist of the emotional habitus of Pride activism in a more focusing on specific emotions.

### **3.2. Ambivalent Feelings, Political Possibilities**

One of the basic disjuncture's I came across between the interviews and the literature, was that pride in literature is often, if not always, theorized over its associations with shame. Negative feelings such as shame, fear, and loneliness were possible to be analyzed from the narrations of the interviewees, yet the political discourses of 'onur' has always been coded as the advocacy of a humane living conditions for LGBTI people. Thomas Scheff (1990) argues that emotions have a role in maintaining social relations and community connections and he conceptualizes pride through its cultural resonances of belonging and social bonds. According to his account of pride as a feeling, realized through sustaining the social ties intact, is an emotion that moves individuals towards deciding what is doable and what is not. This distinction of doability is theorized as the virtuality and actuality of one's self and personality. The virtuality then refers to the idealized forms of being in a society whereas the actuality means the actual orientations in one's social behaviors. If these selves could cooperate then it is ideally becoming possible for an individual to keep their social bonds intact, whereas a disjuncture between these selves could result in losing these bonds, losing one's sociality (Scheff, 1990).

At this point he talks about 'embarrassment' (15) as feeling that keeps these two selves from becoming too distant or from conflicting with one another. When there is a disjuncture between these two selves, feelings of shame and its manifestations as embarrassment plays out the balancing force. Hence these set of emotions are actually threatening oneself to deviating from the socially idealized and accepted manners of existence. Scheff (1990) believes that shame and the idea of losing one's sociality results in the avoidance of the threat, namely the actual self. The dominance of the virtual self, manifests itself through caution and avoidance. So the tension between these two selves comes out either as pride (when the social bonds are kept intact and ideal) and shame (when the disjuncture occurs) (Scheff, 1990). Pride is outward and joyous within the cultural limits whereas shame drives individuals to hide, if not possible to inhibit, the actions and situations that cause shame (Scheff, 1990:15).

How can we conceptualize this account of the relation between social norms and emotions in the context of LGBTI politics? What are the manifests of various emotions on LGBTI people's political psyche? Although Scheff does not orient his arguments of social bonds or

relations towards a specific context, it is not hard to imagine the workings of emotions such as shame and pride in heteronormative society. It is important to ask what happens when socially conventionalized demarcations of pride and shame are transgressed and expressed publicly. What happens when the cultural limits of expressing pride is overturned and shame is becoming something to be acknowledged and acted upon rather than concealed? In this manner one can draw the result from the Pride Parades that these emotions are gaining a counter-meaning and function at the same time. As I will indicate later in this chapter, through the course of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey, acknowledgement and expression of feelings such as shame have played a role in the development of the sense of a community as well as individually in terms of belonging, socialization and feeling of existence and crowd. Although I have started to build my analysis through providing such an approach to the relation of pride with its asserted opposite shame, the kinds of feelings the participants have told me includes many others. Pride is often conceptualized with shame in literature as I have tried to exemplify, but Onur in Turkey, through the Pride activism, comes to consist of simultaneously felt and seemingly contradicting states of emoting.

Gould attributes a socially constituted feature to the ways in which we tend to feel every day. However, these certain ways of feelings may produce normative values around their expressions and especially for LGBTI's, the emotional habitus consists of socially attributed shame and secrecy together with senses of failure (Gould 2009, Halberstam 2011). The normative side of the emotional habitus, Gould asserts, creates an ambivalence for LGBTI individuals. 'Gay and Lesbian ambivalence' as she calls it, refers to the simultaneously felt contradictory feelings such as shame along with pride and fear along with motivation or "repulsion from a society that oppresses sexual minorities while at the same time protesting for acceptance and recognition" (2009:24). This emotionally ambivalent states then, stirs how LGBTI activists respond to the social and political conjuncture, how they come to understand the context and create the senses of political openings. So, how are these emotional structures or 'emotional habitus' approached within the concept of Onur and Pride activism in Turkey? What does the emotional habitus of LGBTI's in Turkey include? Which feelings are mostly expressed during Pride Parades?

Gould (2009) states that pride had rehabilitative function for a generation of activists who experienced shame and fear in its gruesome form through AIDS epidemic in 1980's. As I have noted earlier, pride had come to refer to the success of the AIDS activism despite the fear of death and social shaming of LGBTI's in the USA. It provided 'pedagogies' of political action and senses of collective accomplishment (Gould, 2009). Differently from this, out of my fieldwork, Onur came to be set as a roof concept, a main discourse of the movement to the ways of acting against the heteronormativity and oppression. Its discursiveness includes humane forms of living, equality and justice before laws and legal protection along with the social respect and recognition as I have conceptualized in the previous chapter. Onur, then frames the injustices and violence towards LGBTI's. Gamson (1992:32) states that injustice frames within a social movement context creates a way of expressing the feelings like anger and frustration, indignation and rage towards a "perceived injustice", such as the Lambdaİstanbul closure case. Therefore, instead of pointing to the outcome of the LGBTI activism in general, for most of the participants, Onur sets a definition of the ways of confrontation and projects an understanding of how society should be. Basic understanding of this political statement attached to the Pride activism could be summarized through the narratives of the participants, as equality, justice and legal protection embedded within an understanding of 'humaneness'. Butler (2004) argues that the terms that situate people within the margins of 'being human' is socially constructed and unsteady. Socially attributed conditions of 'humaneness' are those which excludes certain groups of people, depriving off their humanity and sociality, placing them on the line between being 'human and less-than-human' (Butler 2004:12).

Indeed this rating of being human is conducted through heteronormativity<sup>72</sup> for the matters of sexuality and gender. Both as a strategy and consequence of heteronormative setting, those who are deemed as deviants and perverts are driven into isolation, secrecy, fear and shame. Hence the practical production of the political discourses around 'humaneness' cannot be separated from states of feelings as such and the emotional dimensions of Pride activism.

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<sup>72</sup> Heteronormativity is defined as the constitution of a culture thoroughly according to the naturalized and idealized heterosexual conduct. Its socio-sexual practices and value generations works through marginalization and exclusion of those others who do not fall into the category of heterosexual (Çakırlar & Delice 2012:11).

Departing from the narratives of the participants these seemingly negative feelings have been setting up the emotional structure of LGBTI Movement in Turkey for the last twenty-five years. Denunciations of LGBTI individuals through accusations of immorality, perversion and dishonorableness which aim to isolate and situate people in an environment of secrecy and fear, became the very reasons of their coming out and the reasons of establishing politics of coming out and community formation. While these (in)visible ways of social oppression tries to land LGBTI people in a social prison, their becoming sources of political action works through and aims to de-structuralize normality and naturalness of heterosexuality. In this manner, the activism based upon such a concept and politics around it reclaims what normatively marginalizes LGBTI's; visible in the slogans at the Pride Parades such as "Velev ki İbneyiz" or "Genel Ahlaksız". Namely, besides the pleasure of and satisfaction from job done or even beyond this, Onur frames a reclamation of lives that are deemed unlivable.

The emotional dimension on the other hand, comes from the people's encounters with the social conditions (Gould, 2009:31). Also as Williams theorize, 'the structure of feeling' that refers to the shared values and perceptions of a group of people (1977:130), emotions such as fear, anger, irritation, hesitation or anxiety might arise from the social conditions and how a group of people pursuing a political claim over their lives process those conditions. Both purported by the heteronormative society and LGBTI Movement's context in Turkey, these encounters could arise fear or simultaneously felt excitement, hope and motivation as my research participants indicates. One of these encounters was the traumatic experience LGBTI activists had in 1993 Pride Week cancellations due to the prohibitions, arrests and deportations as Serdar has mentioned. According to him this was the reason why LGBTI activists were demotivated to organize a parade while continuing organizing the Pride Weeks. So what made the first parade possible in terms of the feelings of readiness? There are a few themes came out of my fieldwork such as fear vis-à-vis existence, crowds or being crowded and joy which made the organization of Pride Parades after 2003 feasible.

### 3.2.1. Fear

“It was with fear that we were trying to create and awareness in people”<sup>73</sup> said Belgin for the first Pride Parade in 2003. Perhaps one of the most expressed feeling that participants have related to the Pride activism was fear. Fear for Belgin, Serdar, Yeşim and Erdal has marked the first years of Pride Parades. Throughout the 2000’s, Yeşim states that:

“Homosexuality was not even on the front burner within the society when you look at it. We only knew that we are under oppression, we are driven into fear and we were indeed afraid. Why would we organize a parade if we weren’t?”<sup>74</sup>

Fear is a component of the structure of feeling that Pride activism generated then; as Williams state that (1977:133) “the structure of feeling is in a condition of unarticulated pre-emergence that is neither visible nor fully developed but can be felt nonetheless.” Also according to Massumi, fear or the threat it creates has a futuristic aspect to it that causes a change in the present with a virtual power to affect the present (2005:35). However the threat and the social fear of being stigmatized or the possibility of being imposed physical violence either by police or conservative people is more an ever present issue rather than only a threat in the future, as Cihan expresses for 2004 parade:

“Well we walked **kenardan kenardan**. We were a bit nervous for what if police intervenes or someone would say something, we were already few. But then again these are not things that we wouldn’t face in our everyday life. Transsexuals are always take under custody by police or fags are always dealing with phobic.”<sup>75</sup>

Besides this situation, the very act of being on streets as those who are driven into secrecy had its emotional tolls on people. Although the second Pride Parade’s press statement is

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<sup>73</sup> “Yani biz korkarak insanlara farkındalık yaratmaya çalışıyorduk.”

<sup>74</sup> “Yani bakacak olursan, konu böyle toplumda gündem bile değildi. Biz sadece baskı altında olduğumuzu biliyoruz, korkmamız isteniyor, korkuyoruz da, korkmasak niye yapalım ki yürüyüş.”

<sup>75</sup> “Ya işte kenardan kenardan yürüdük. Biraz tedirgindik hani polis falan karışır mı bir bişe dermi, zaten az kişiyiz falan. Ama hani zaten günlük hayatımızda da olmayan şeyler değil, transları her zaman polis alıp götürüyor, ibneler her zaman fobiklerle uğraşıyo.”

calling people to come out in order to realize freedom for LGBTI's, the act of coming out, which then sets the form of politics and politicization, has created a complex structure of feeling.

“These closets are not our destiny. Unless we say we are homosexuals, we can only change this system which presumes that we are attracted to our opposite sex through coming out and saying we are homosexuals!”<sup>76</sup>

Says Serdar in the video of the 2004 Pride Parade. Being one of the few activists who were relatively in a more comfortable situation with getting in front of the cameras to read the press statement, he narrates the 2004 parade as follows:

“We were afraid but it wasn't that visible. We weren't used to cameras. There were not many who were open to their families and would get in front of cameras. Most of them were participating with their sunglasses and hats or hanging around by the excuse of taking photos.”<sup>77</sup>

Similarly Yeşim says that:

“Actually when you see the photos and the news of those people it feels like ‘wow’. But dışı seni içi beni yakar. Back then, had you talked with them, wanted them to tell... Some, if not all, were not open in any case, it was stressing. Well we were thinking that who would care for a small group, why would it be in the news. We said it's not newsworthy that a small group reading a press statement, but see when it comes to the homosexuality it was on many place.”<sup>78</sup>

Also Ülkü was one of those who felt the uneasiness yet was a part of the organization of the 2004 Pride Parade:

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<sup>76</sup> “Bu dolaplar kaderimiz değil. Eşcinseliz demedikçe, karşı cinsten hoşlandığımızı varsayan düzeni ancak açılarak eşcinseliz diyerek değiştirebiliriz.”

<sup>77</sup> “Korkuyorduk ama o kadar da görünür değil. Kameralara alışık değiliz. Kamera önüne çıkacak ailesine açık çok insan yok. Çoğu şapka ile gözlükle falan katılıyordu ya da fotoğraf çekme ayağına arkada takılıyordu.”

<sup>78</sup> “Aslında o insanların fotoğraflarını haberlerini görünce ‘wow’ gibi oluyor. Ama içi seni dışı beni yakar. O zamanlar onlarla birebir konuşan anlat desen... hani hepsi olmasa da birileri illa ki açık değildi ve tedirgin ediciydi. Hani şey diye düşünüyorduk yani küçük bir gurup, kim takar ki, ne haber olacak, Türkiye’de küçük bir gurubun yaptığı basın açıklamasının medya için bir değeri yoktur dedik ama işte konu eşcinseller olunca baya bir yerde çıktı.”

“I was recording there so I had the possibility of staying outside. I was not open to my family. I didn’t have the courage to do everything upfront and visible, rather I didn’t find it necessary back then”<sup>79</sup>

Gould (2009) discusses that although we try to form an understanding and consciousness around our sexualities and genders, within the LGBTI politics it will always have its emotional handicap of being accepted in one place at the expense of being rejected in the other. Fear of being recognized and/or identified as LGBTI along with the excitement of and motivation towards participating in and organizing something which is presumed to be liberating creates a tension and hesitance. Then shapes one’s physical proximity to the action itself as well as political as it is in Ülkü’s case. Williams (1977) asserts that feeling structures are way to capture various mediations between the general and particular, it is an evaluation of the lived experience and its articulation (Williams, 1979). So the act of recording and holding a camera, creatively put, gives a sense of looping from this emotional toll, a sense of mediation between the felt and the expressed which, according to Gould, helps us to perform “simultaneously enabled and circumscribed political behavior helping both to set and to delimit” our engagement (2009:90)

In the “Epistemology of the Closet”, Sedgwick argues that the ‘gay closet’ is a feature for many of LGBTI’s defining their social lives however she mentions for those few with courage enough to be forthright about their identities, closet do not impact on their sociality (1990: 68). Despite the fact that Serdar was reading a manifesto-like<sup>80</sup> text for the 2004 Pride Parade press statement, during our interview he repeatedly told me that he never had much issue with coming out not only to his friends but also to his family:

“I am open to myself since the age of 17 and at 19 I came out to my family. I have never been in closet in anywhere I’ve been. I’m open in my work life and it never was an issue. What’s impossible for many was possible for me. My family

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<sup>79</sup> “Ben orda kamera çekimi yapıyordum ki bir yandan da istediğimde dışarda durma imkanım oluyordu. Her şeyi çok görünür ön planda yapma cesaretim yoktu hani çok da gerekli görmüyordum o zamanlar.”

<sup>80</sup> This is how Yeşim describes the 2004 press statement because of its depiction of the general issues of LGBTI’s and offering them a resolution through activism and calling for people to come out of their closets.

didn't cause any trouble, I was lucky for that. Mostly they said 'Serdar you're on TV too much' that's all."<sup>81</sup>

So what made it possible for him to be able to appear in Pride Parades openly and be up front, was the not-so-much reactive immediate environment. However for many others the closet becomes a structure of the heteronormative oppression (Sedgwick, 1990:71) within which the only possible way to promote LGBTI politics was the one incognito. Also people would chose to stand up to their immediate environments such as Deniz who received death threats from his family after he appeared in the media as he was reading the 2003 press statement:

"I was open since I joined LGBTI. Then after the 2003 Pride I became totally open because we appeared on many news and stuff. I had many issues because of this but I was ready. My answers were political anymore, even to my family. I wasn't in a situation of apologizing or explaining myself to anyone. There was fear but more than that there was excitement which surpassed the fear. I mean those times, I thought my father would come to İstanbul and kill me, they insinuated, but I took that risk."<sup>82</sup>

So in this vein, what kind of a political opening do the ambivalence of fear, excitement, stress and motivation provides? How these openings are charged feasible for people? An example to this emotional political drives would be the senses of 'doability' Yeşim is talking about:

"Everyone is closeted. Also almost no one had an experience in organizing a parade in other political organizations. Well, when Kaos participated in May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations in 2001 we were like 'aa it is doable'."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "17 yaşından beri açığım kendime, 19 yaşında da aileme açıldım. Girdiğim hiçbir ortamda kapalı olmadım, iş hayatımda da açığım sorun olmadı. Pek çok insan için imkansız olan imkansızdı benim için. Ailem böyle hiçbir sorun yaratmadı, sanslıydım o açıdan. Bana en fazla dediler ki 'Serdar çok fazla televizyona çıkıyorsun' o kadar."

<sup>82</sup> "Ben LGBTİye girdiğmden beri açıktım zaten. Sonra 2003 pridedan sonra tamamen açılmış oldum çünkü baya bir haberlerde falan çıktık. Bir sürü sorun yaşadım bundan ötürü ama buna hazırlıklıydım artık ben. Politikti cevaplarım artık, aile de buna dahil. Kimseden özür dileyecek, açıklama durumunda değildim. Korku vardı ama o korkuyu bastıran bir heyecanım da vardı. Yani o dönem babamın İstanbula gelip beni öldüreceğini düşündüm, ima ettiler, bunu da göze almıştım."

<sup>83</sup> "Herkes gizli. Bi de neredeyse hiç kimsenin herhangi başka bir örgütten edinmiş olduğu yürüyüş organizasyonu deneyimi yok. Hani Kaos 2001'de 1 Mayıs'a katılınca 'aa yapılabilirmiş' oldu."

Similarly but exhibiting another instance that made it feasible for LGBTI activist to organize their own parade for Erdal was:

“We used to have ‘coming-out’ meetings. But the parade was something nobody would think on it or be courageous for it. Because there were very few people. Later on well as the feminists and leftists started to come and go, and started to get their support, we decided to do it. Because we were afraid we were only 10 or 12 people. Getting out on the street creates a distinct sense. We were nervous but at least we saw that it is doable.”<sup>84</sup>

Through the forming of the group consciousness and the solidarity feelings that Yeşim and Erdal are talking about are becoming the forms of these emotional forces that penetrates the fear and enable people. Massumi further argues that “fear strikes the body and compels it to action before it registers consciously (expressed in language) and when it registers it is as a realization growing from the bodily action” (2005:36). For him, fear has an activating quality as “an intensity of experience” (Massumi, 2005:37). For those who expressed the emotional atmosphere of those first years of Pride Parades, the fear or the anxiety of an attack was never actualized. So the emotional quality of the parades were actually realized through the reality it created. For Yeşim and Erdal being able to walk on the streets to promote LGBTI rights has indicated senses of reality (of ability) vis-à-vis the fears and anxiety over low numbers of participants or being or not being out. So as Williams (1977) states that what is being experienced is within the feeling (of fear) rather than the content of the situation, the feeling of fear is articulated as though it has been experienced. He states that the experience (the fear and the act of walking on İstiklal in this case) is only accessible through the articulation of the structure of feeling (1977:134).

Hence the emotional habitus which supposedly channels LGBTI’s into fear and secrecy, builds up a dynamic through realization of “doability” and “solidarity”. This dynamic however, is continuously influenced by the “reigning emotional habitus in society” which results in an ambivalent emotional state (Gould, 2009:35). This “reigning emotional habitus”

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<sup>84</sup> “O zamanlar açılma toplantıları falan yapardık. Ama yürüyüş kimsenin düşünüp cesaret edemediği bir şeydi. Çünkü çok az insan vardı. Sonraları işte solcular feministler falan gidip gelmeye başladıkça onların desteğini aldıkça yapmaya karar verdik. Korkuyorduk hani çünkü 10-12 kişiydik. Sokağa çıkmak başlı başına bir algı oluşturuyor. Tedirgindik ama en azından olabildiğini gördük.”

can be conceptualized as what Ahmed (2011) introduces as the affects that heteronormativity creates. According to Ahmed, heteronormativity shapes the surfaces of individuals within their everyday life in all aspects of their sociality such as romance, friendship, attachments or their bodily formations and so on. This emotional dimension of heteronormativity then plays on one's senses of comfort and satisfaction when the tenets of it are fulfilled. She asserts that "queer subjects, when faced by the comforts of heterosexuality may feel uncomfortable, awkward and out of place, discomfort then becomes disorientation and estrangement through being asked to avoid the signs of queerness in a social space (Ahmed, 2011:148)." So basically what she provides is that this discomfort then comes with a potential for one to form their identity (Ahmed, 2011).

Another component of fear and anxiety to be recognized by family or friends, I think goes together with the cultural attribution of shame to LGBTIs. Through the coming out meetings, Sunday gatherings in Istanbul, people had found chance to express what is not supposed to be public, visible and audible. Expression of shame and secrecy, fear of being recognized and realization of the collectivity of such feelings had a cultural political impact as Ahmed suggests (2011:102). According to her, expressions of shame and "guilt" (in this case of not being able to reach up to the heteronormative sociality) can be a mode of community making along with reconciliation and recognition (2011:108). The famous placard of Pride Parades "Velev ki ibneyiz!", therefore I believe, is one of the collective expression of the feelings that had been shared individually and used to form a community of LGBTIs, indicating the collective self-recognition.

Therefore, what I tried to define as activism incognito in terms of people participating in Pride Parades as Serdar mentions with the glasses and hats trying to cover their face and the anxieties of being recognized Yeşim points out boils down to the creative forms of activist performances of such discomfort despite the inner stress and fear. Yet are these emotions still relevant in the Pride Parades? If no, how did this emotional atmosphere created throughout the first years of Pride parades, change and in which direction?

As I have asked my informants about whether they feel the same every year in the Pride Parades or not, Erdal, Yeşim and Ferhat significantly emphasized the acceleration of feelings

such as fear and shame and ability to realize oneself as the Pride Parades grew bigger and Pride activism improved.

“I first participated in the parade in 2010 and I had a darling, we joined together, holding each other’s hands. When you do activism for a while, walking hand in hand there...was a moment when I raised totally, for me. Pride Parades are about that for me since then. Being able to be yourself.”<sup>85</sup> (Ferhat)

Despite this statement of an environment providing an opportunity for individuals to be able to be how they feel about themselves, as the parades got crowded the senses of threat yet empowerment has been experienced by the activists that I have interviewed with. Therefore in the next section I intend to do an analysis of how and what kind of feelings crowds or the idea of being crowded generate for Pride activism and which social political conjunctures are becoming significant in this manner.

### **3.2.2. Feelings Emerging from Crowds**

Pride Parade’s being “the show of the strength of the movement”<sup>86</sup> in Sinan’s words insinuates the feelings of empowerment of the movement with the field of social visibility and social change. This notion of its being the biggest event of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey had also resonated in Serdar’s and Deniz’s narratives. Making such a statement is indifferent to what Gould explains as the “heroic rhetoric” of the LGBTI Movement in the USA over the notion of being proud and successful. After I asked what you would use instead of Onur to Serdar, he said:

“There is no need for something else. Whatever you say, it is pride you’re doing there. I’ve cried a lot at the parades.”

**Why?**

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<sup>85</sup> “İlk olarak 2010da katıldım yürüyüşe ve o zaman sevgilim vardı, birlikte katıldık. El eleydik. Belli bir süre aktivizmle uğraşınca orda el ele yürümek tam olarak yükseldiğim bir an oldu benim için.”

<sup>86</sup> “Onur Yürüyüşleri hareketin gövde gösterisidir”

“Well you feel proud with what you’ve done. People worked their asses off to make it like this today. It is the pride of that at the same time.”<sup>87</sup>

These forms of rhetoric, as Gould implies, counter-balances the ambivalent state of feelings (2009:87). So, merely the number of people participating in Pride Parades becomes a thing to be proud of, a success, an accomplishment of the movement. On the point of counter-balancing, the ambivalent feelings such as mentioned in the previous section like fear and enthusiasm, motivation and so on seems reasonably related to the numbers of people participating and supporting the parades as my fieldwork has revealed. About the significance of numbers for 2003 Pride Parade, Erdal stated that knowing the support of others (as in other social and political organizations) it was more possible as well as stressing. However during the course of Pride activism he acknowledges the change that being crowded has brought upon the emotional atmosphere of the Pride Parades:

“Well there is still fear (of being attacked by police or other or fear of being recognized) but not in the same way. I mean it can be concealed easily now. If something happens like police comes or somebody attacks...there are thousands of people there.”<sup>88</sup>

Ahmed says that “vulnerability is the feeling of susceptibility and openness which then exposes body to the danger” (2011:68). In light of this statement, Erdal’s feelings direct me towards thinking that being crowded has not only empowered the politics but also empowered the people’s psyche which were rendered vulnerable before.

According to Collins, when a social movement starts to be able to address more specific issues or “targeted injustices”, the emotional outcomes in terms of solidarity and resistance increase and starts to reach out to more and more people (2001: 32). One of these moments of headway progress of LGBTI Movement in Turkey was in 2007. As I have tried to establish

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<sup>87</sup> “Gerek yok başka bir şeye. Ne dersen de orda yaptığın şey onur. Çok ağladım ben yürüyüşlerde.”

### **Neden?**

“E çünkü gurur duyuyor insan yaptığıyla. İnsanlar kışını yırttı bu hale gelsin diye. Bunun da onuru aynı zamanda.”

<sup>88</sup> “Ya artık o korkular var ama aynı şekilde değil. Yani daha kolay kaybolabiliyor orada. Hani bişe olsa biri saldırı polis gelse orda binlerce insan var.”

a causality between the first Pride Parade with a massive participation and the Lambdaİstanbul closure case, throughout my interviews Belgin, Yeşim and Cihan have noted that 2007 was actually the beginning of the Pride Parades as we know it today. Their narrations of enthusiasm of, solidarity with feminists, socialists and international agents through channeling anger against such an injustice was depicting the emotional characteristics of 2007 parade. However Yeşim has drawn my attention to something rather different than these such positive emotions. She claims that the fear out of the possible threat of conservative groups to attack the protestors was manifesting itself more as the size of the parades got bigger:

“Well every year more and more people were coming, more than our capacity. Sloganeers were not heard, megaphones were not enough... we had difficulties but that gave me excitement. However we were afraid that something might happen. Once, friends from the feminist groups came and said: ‘there are ultra-nationalists around be careful! But don’t spread it much!’ OK...but what are we going to do? Nothing happened though and I think those ‘supposedly ultra-nationalists’ were actually fags from lower classes and peripheries of İstanbul. I mean as we were going bigger it felt like we were attracting more attention not only of those who are close to us or sympathetic to us but also those who despises us, as the threat was increasing.”<sup>89</sup>

Heidegger notes that anxiety has no direction in terms of it does not know where the object of threat is but it is an inhibitive and preventive manner towards a known object (1962: 31, cited in Ahmed, 2011:65). This situation could be interpreted as a projection of social anxieties that LGBTI’s individually experience in their personal lives on massive terms. Or perhaps this is what Belgin calls in terms of the changing features of Pride activism:

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<sup>89</sup> “Ya her sene bizim gücümüzden daha kalabalık geliyordu insanlar. Slogancılar duyulmuyordu, megafon yetmiyor falan. Zorlanırdık ama bu bana heyecan verirdi. Ama yine de bi şey olacak diye korkardık. Bir keresinde feminist çevreden arkadaşlar gelip şey dediler: ya işte etrafta ülkücüler var dikkat edin! Ama insanlara da yaymayın!’ OK de...napacaz? Sonuçta bişey olmadı gerçi ve hani o ‘ülküçü’ sanılanlarda muhtemelen İstanbulun böyle daha alt tav-bakasından çevresinden gelenlerdi. Yani biz büyüdükçe sanki sadece bizi seven kendi çevremizin değil, bizden nefret edenlerin de dikkatini çekiyormuşuz gibi geliyordu, tehdit artıyormuş gibi.”

“We didn’t know what to do when the quilt was pulled in the sense of freedoms and visibility, we got in a quandary, stark naked”<sup>90</sup>

The object of the anxiety is not a present one yet one that has the probability of being present. Increasing size of the Pride Parades as projection of the increasing size of the movement has not only paved the way for gaining visibility and confronting oppression but also made the violence and the frequency of this violence more visible.

Another moment of acceleration that Collins talks about in terms of targeted injustices of a movement; was Gezi. Having mentioned how Gezi movement provided a space for LGBTI’s to connect with many other social and political groups and had a chance to increase their consciousness about LGBTI issues; the 2013 Pride Parade came to be known as the biggest parade ever organized in Turkey by the activist environment. Yet for this section it is important to ask how the LGBTI group in Gezi was formed. According to Ferhat:

“Well we as the Pride Week committee already went directly to the square, recessing our meetings. There were a few people but it wasn’t an organizational thing or something. Then we saw that every group are coming with the flags of their organizations, we said we have our rainbow flag. LGBTI Block was established as such.”<sup>91</sup>

Supporting the idea that the rainbow flag<sup>92</sup> was an important agent leading people to have a group consciousness in Gezi, Yeşim says the following:

“We have recognized each other by the flag. Individuals have brought the flags it wasn’t an organizational decision. Those who got out of their houses came with the flags. Well this is a result of Pride Weeks. I mean those people have stolen those flags from the Pride Parade. So when they hears something like this they grabbed their flags and got out. Those flags brought people together.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Özgürlükler ve görünürlük adına üzerimizden yorgan çekilince ne yapacağımızı bilemedik, dımdızlak kaldık.”

<sup>91</sup> “Ya biz zaten Onur Haftası komitesi olarak toplantılara ara verip direk gittik meydana. Birkaç kişi vardı falan ama öyle örgütlü falan bir durum yoktu. Baktık her grup kendi örgüt bayrağıyla geliyor e bizim de gökkuşağı bayrağımız var dedik. Blok öyle kuruldu orda.”

<sup>92</sup> Carrying a rainbow flag, having bumper stickers or hanging it on your walls is a political action says Gilbert Baker who for the first time came up with the idea of a rainbow flag as a symbol for the LGBTI Movement and designed it in 1978 (Baker).

<sup>93</sup> “Bayraktan hep tanıdık birbirimizi. Bayrakları da hep bireyler açtı yalnız hani örgüt kararı falan değildi. Evinden çıkan gökkuşağı bayrağıyla gelmiş, e bu da Onur Haftasının birikimi.

I have mentioned the first usage of the big rainbow flag in 2007 in the previous chapter. Rainbow flag, both locally and internationally, represents difference and diversity. Also colors and the related sentiments such as joy and happiness becomes an important political discourse for Pride Parades. Sinan explains the atmosphere that rainbow flag generates as a symbol as follows:

“That flag is very important. Once, it is something that makes the parade seem really big. As the system turn us grey, it means that we are despitefully colorful. Alive and kicking.”<sup>94</sup>

Also, on the one hand, Ferhat narrates how the experience of organizing the parade within such conditions of popular unrest, police brutality and massive energy people generate against that have resulted in a massive parade, as follows:

“We were under a lot of strain, whether would they allow us to walk from Taksim or not... But there wasn't a problem. There was a fresh excitement left in people from Gezi and their voices were still coming out loudly. Besides, those who were coming from other cities paid off their not being here during Gezi.”<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, through the uprising of masses not only of one particular political group but an unlikely combination of groups such as nationalists, anti-capitalist Muslims along with socialists, football fan groups, feminists and LGBTI's; Yeşim believes that despite the energy and potential created and realized within Gezi, it had side effects:

“We were 20 people, if 10 people organized the parade, participation of the other 10 happened because we called 100 people (she's talking about 2004 Pride Parade). I mean there wasn't Facebook or Twitter. Now there is the comfort of putting less effort but doing bigger things. 'I give 3 hours to this movement every week!' OK, some might say this but it started to be a habit after Gezi. This gave people the idea that social upheavals occur out of nowhere. How is it formed, how is organized, debating, sharing the jobs, getting upset while doing it but defending yourself back... People have not experienced these. You collect

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Hani insanlar o bayrakları yürüyüşlerden çaldılar. E böyle bişi duyunca da kapmışlar bayrakları çıkmışlar. Herkes birbirini bu sayede buldu. O bayrak birleştirdi insanları.”

<sup>94</sup>Ya o bayrak çok önemli. Bi kere yürüyüşü acıip büyük gösteren bişey. Sistem bizi grileştirdikçe biz inadına rengarenkiz demek o. Cıvıl cıvıl...”

<sup>95</sup>“Çok stress altındaydık. Taksimden yürümemize izin verecekler mi vermicekler mi... Ama bi sıkıntı olmadı. Geziden kalan taze bir heyecan vardı insanlarda sesleri gür ve tutkuluydu. Ayrıca şehir dışından gelenler de Gezide burada olamayışlarının acısını çıkardılar.”

garbage at the park, super! You take great risk but are getting politicized? The government is already depriving you off this experience. I have observed this with people who joined the LGBTI Movement after Gezi Resistance. They think they do a lot as they just come and go sometimes but then they get disappointed easily. Everyone was super motivated and revolted but when you look at it, the governing party is still in position and continues to bullshit and attack. This situation has created some sort of a depression. I mean, while having the feelings of a great collectivity, everyone went into their shells again. That uprising was remained inconclusive because they didn't put the effort to create it. Whereas, a lot have been done for the last 20 years to prepare such moments... I call this 'Gezi Effect'”<sup>96</sup>

Crowds have brought a new emotional dimension to and added up to the structure of feeling of Pride Parades. Having the feelings of passing unnoticed or feelings of safety as Erdal mentions or the feelings of accomplishment<sup>97</sup> as Serdar purports and Yeşim insinuates through calling it Gezi Effect; along with the fear and anxieties over the threatening sociality through Yeşim's narratives goes hand in hand when it comes to the analysis of emotional effect of crowds in Pride activism. Adding up to the massification I have introduced in the second chapter, the form of the Pride Parade have also changed.

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<sup>96</sup> “Hani biz 20 kişiydik, yürüyüşü 10 kişi organize ettiyse, diğer 10 kişinin gelmesi o sırada 100 kişiyi telefonla aradık diye oldu. Yani Facebook, Twitter falan yok. Şimdi daha az şey yapıp daha büyük bir iş yapıyor olmanın rahatlığı var. ‘Ben bu harekete haftada 3 saatimi harcarım hac!’ Tamam kimileri bunu diyebilir ama bu Gezi ile gelen genel eğilim olmaya başladı. Bu da insanların kafasında toplumsal ayaklanmaların kendiliğinden oluyormuş hissini verdi. Hani o nasıl oluşturulur, nasıl organize edilir, tartışmak, iş bölümü yapmak, bunu yaparken üzölmek sonra kendini savunmak... Bunları deneyimlemedi insanlar. Çöp topluyorsun parkta super! Büyük risk göze alıyorsun ama siyasallaşılıyor musun? Devlet zaten seni bu deneyimden mahrum bırakıyor. Gezi Direnişisi ile birlikte LGBTI Hareketine katılan insanlarda bunu çok gözlemledim ben. Ara sıra gidip geldiğinde böyle çok büyük bir şey yaptığını düşünüyor ama sonra çok çabuk hayal kırıklığına kapılıyorlar. Gezi’de super motive herkes ayaklandı ama baktığında iktidar partisi hala ayakta ve saçmalamaya, saldırmaya devam ediyor. Bu durum insanlarda bir çeşit depresyon yarattı. Yani birden müthiş bir kollektivitenin içinde hissederken, herkes tekrar kabuğına kapandı. Bunu yaratabilmenin emeğini vermediklerinden o ayaklanma onlar için sonuçsuz kaldı. Halbuki son 20 yılda o ortamı hazırlamak için neler yapıldı... Ben buna Gezi Efektini diyorum.”

<sup>97</sup> By ‘accomplishment’ I specifically refer to what Gould considers as determinative in the production the Gay Pride through ADIS activism. It connotes the senses of success, being able to compose an action towards an injustice or simply being able to recruit big numbers of people to the Pride Parade in its very conventional meaning.

### 3.2.3. Joyful Activism

Another emotional dimension of Pride Parades is about its form. Prior to my fieldwork, I was aware of some of the criticisms towards the structure of the parades. By structure I mean the way people are joining, their costumes, make ups and the rhythm band. As a personal point of view, Pride Parades in Turkey have always been a space for me to cheer up and a time to wait with impatience. It has always been a space where joy and music mash up with slogans and carrying banners. However, throughout my personal engagement with activist practices both in Lambdaİstanbul and LuBunya Boğaziçi University LGBTI community, I came across with discussions about whether the current joyful form of parades are losing its political side or not as one of the political articulations of the movement's becoming mainstream. Hence for this thesis, I was very curious about how my informants would respond to such a debate. The main criticism was coming from those LGBTI groups who were more related to the socialist organizations such as Socialist HBT Movement and Gökkuşuğunun Kızılı. As mentioned in the second chapter by Cihan, these groups have been a challenge for the organization committee on the basis of their participation to the Pride Parades. In an interview I have conducted a year ago for a course project, Demet, one of the eldest members of HBT group, asserts that:

“At first it wasn't like this. We were doing our politics, we were showing that it was a serious thing we do. But see it's not like this anymore. It's like a festival there. What are we celebrating? Pride Parades are now like parties organized by funds. That's why I don't feel like participating much.”<sup>98</sup>

Having this previous criticism in mind, I did not want to point specifically to this issue during my interviews but rather I have waited to see if any of my informants would bring this topic out. And they did. Ferhat directly answered my question about what kind of problems and criticisms they are receiving through their course of Pride activism with this issue:

“Sometimes people say ‘like a festival’. Yes it can be like a festival but we also produce our political verses, our press statement is being read and our slogans are being shouted. Places are being alluded where need to be alluded. Well I don't know if the allusion is finding its direction but it might so, that last year (2013)

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<sup>98</sup> “Başlarda böyle değildi, politikamızı yapıyorduk, ciddi bir iş yaptığımızı gösteriyorduk. Ama şuanda böyle değil bak. Ortalık festival yeri gibi. Neyi kutluyoruz? Onur yürüyüşleri artık fon alınıp düzenlenen bir parti gibi. O nedenle de katılalım gelmiyor pek.”

almost one hundred thousand people have paraded. Let people get free in any way they want.”<sup>99</sup>

Cihan gives the clues about the first time these arguments against the latest form of Pride parades as joyous festivals rather than a political protest:

“Those dances and music had started in after 2007. Since then, people had started to come in different shapes. See, trans’ with costumes, like a diva...there the Rhythm of Resistance<sup>100</sup> started to take part. Then we discussed about this whether we are depoliticizing or not. Let’s not lose our say so and so.”<sup>101</sup>

This new atmosphere started after the first mass participation to the Pride Parades in LGBTI Movement’s history in Turkey, had brought an even more unusual manner to the politics of the left in Turkey. Colors, face paintings, costumes, drags, divas, music and dances have accelerated the performative dimension of LGBTI activism. The senses of joy and pleasure started to be transformed into a political statement against the social deprivation. Serdar talks about the impacts of this new atmosphere on the social perceptions of LGBTI’s and the political participation as follows:

**Does this joyful environment that the parade presents have an impact on the increasing participation, do you think?**

“Well yes why not! You know there are positive prejudices about homosexuals as well. Cute, pleasant, amusing, funny and so on... perhaps by this means, an identity came to the fore. People became supporters of their friends and their children. It made it interesting for people.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> “Bazen insanlar şey söylüyor: ‘Festival gibi’. Evet festival gibi olabilir ama biz siyasi sözümüzü de üretiyoruz, basın açıklamamız da okunuyor, sloganımız da atılıyor. Taş atılacak yerlere atılıyor. Hani gidiyor mu yerine bilemem ama gidiyor belli ki geçen sene yüzbine yakın insan yürüdü. İnsanlar nasıl özgürleşmek istiyorlarsa öyle davranıyorlar.”

<sup>100</sup> ‘Direniş Ritimleri’ is the name of the band playing bongos and rings at the Pride Parades for the last 7 years in which I also played in 2011.

<sup>101</sup> O danslar ve müzikler 2007den sonra başladı. O zamandan beri insanlar şekil şekil gelmeye başladılar. İşte translar kostümlerle diva gibi falan. İşte direniş ritimleri çıkmaya başladı o zaman. Bunu tartıştık sonra acaba politiklikten çıkıyor muyuz diye. Sözümüzü de kaybetmeyelim falan...”

<sup>102</sup> **Sence bu eğlenceli ortamın yürüyüşlere katılımın artışında bir etkisi oldu mu?**

“E tabi niye olmasın! Eşcinseller hakkında pozitif önyargılar da var biliyorsun. Sevimli, neşeli, eğlendirici, komik falan...belki de bu yüzden bi kimlik gündeme geldi. İnsanlar arkadaşlarını ve çocuklarını desteklemeye başladılar. Bunu insanlara ilgi çekici kıldı yani.

Considering Serdar's assertions; as a participant in Pride Parades in İstanbul for seven years, I could concur on the idea that the colorfulness and the noisiness through the rhythm band do create senses of excitement and energy. Tim Jordan (2002) states that the joy or pleasure can be essential dimensions of a social movement where the politics is both supported by and realized through. Conventional socialist movements use concerts, songs and anthems as the strategic tools for proliferating their politics however movements such as LGBTI Movement could form its politics over joy and pleasure which does not delimit its politicalness (Jordan, 2002). In this manner, while the criticism Demet generated is towards the LGBTI politics' softening tone through being all about joy and pleasure during Pride Parades, Serdar and Ferhat's statements are purporting the idea that fun and politics are not separable or would not be strategically ideal to separate the two particularly for the Pride activism.

The emotional atmosphere Pride Parades create enables people to shout slogans such as "We Are Here with All Our Colors" or "If God Didn't like Us, Wouldn't Create Us This Colorful"<sup>103</sup>. The colors, costumes, rhythms and dances all add up to its joyful affect where joy is becoming the form of politics. Jordan call this a politics that is/cannot be put into words (2002: 81). Slogans, raising the left fist up in the air, having stiff and serious faces characterizes the conventional leftist demonstrations and protests however it is difficult to explain the political affects that music, dance, make-ups and costumes purport. When put into speech in a text or a talk it may sound apolitical or non-sensical as Jordan says, politics of pleasure and joy becomes political through connecting with others through touching, feeling (2002: 80). It is a form of politics that connects space and time with the bodies and manifests itself in a collective acceleration of positive emotions. It creates moments of freedom and being able to be who you are as Yeşim says "people experience onur perhaps for the first time in their lives"<sup>104</sup> together with the putting forward the political agendas as Ferhat emphasizes. Therefore, as a post-coup generation which has brought up being afraid

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<sup>103</sup> Bütün Renklerimizle Buradayız! Tanrı Bizi Sevmeseydi, Bu Kadar Renkli Yaratmazdı!

<sup>104</sup> "İnsanlar hayatlarında belki de onur ve topluluk hislerini ilk defa orada yaşıyorlar. Bir günlüğüne, bir kaç saatliğine olsa dahi..."

of whatever considered as political, the joyful atmosphere of the parades, I believe is an important factor in its growing size despite the cultural tensions against politics and “being political”. In a supporting vein Jordan asserts that joy and pleasure, while generating emotions on the surfaces of the bodies as a political orientation, it trespasses the cultural norms (Jordan, 2002: 93).

Overall, the joy through chanting, dancing, colors, costumes and make-ups is what some problematize as the movement’s losing its originality, its “political tone”, it’s becoming like a festival (referring to Pride Parades in Europe and The USA). These criticisms can be considered as challenges of the increasing visibility of the political actions of LGBTI Movement in Turkey and increasing participation in Pride Parades. It is important to ask whether becoming more and more mainstream every year means de-politicization of the movement and how feeling joy is an impediment to the expression of the seriousness of the violent situation that LGBTIs in Turkey are into. As I have mentioned Tim Jordan’s account of joy as politics, the emotional habitus, one that incorporates seemingly contradictory but politically enabling emotions, I believe encapsulates the feelings related to pleasure such as joy and the political resonations of joy, one that denies the “misery” and “victimized appearance”. Therefore Pride Parades are utilized as venues to express this political stance.

### **3.3. Components of Emotional Habitus of Pride Activism**

What are the role of time, place and ideology within the emotional dimension of Pride activism? I intent to open up a space for discussion of what kind of alterations within the emotionality of Pride Parades through changing spaces, times and ideological aspects of the LGBTI activism. Parallel to this inquiry the following sections will issue the relationship of emotions that I have been trying to exhibit until now, with the spaces, time periods and ideological frame of Pride activism.

#### **3.3.1. Spatiality**

The historicity of Taksim for the LGBTI, according to Belgin has rendered the organization of the first pride inevitable in İstiklal Street:

“Eh everyone came (to Pride Parade), many artists and singers. One would wish that Bülent would also come because she owes to Taksim.”

### **Why Taksim?**

“Well we were always there. We came together there, we went out to work in Gezi Park, and we found customers there, had fun and subjected to violence. We lived in Cihangir, Abanoz, Tarlabası...where would it be then?”<sup>105</sup>

Although she narrates the importance of Taksim for transsexuals in the past and links the possibility of the first parade eventually, how would it differ with lesbians and gays and intersex people? Were any sort of importance of the space for them as well? Or is it just a coincidence? I have not asked these questions to my informants, however, Ülkü mentions that:

“As lesbians we did not socialize at Lambda much, we would go to the bars in Taksim to hangout.”<sup>106</sup>

According to these two accounts it is possible to deduce preliminary relations with the parade organization and the emotional charges İstiklal Street and Taksim consist of for LGBTI’s practices of socialization along with the life styles and daily struggles they had to face. Besides these, from a different angle, Ferhat also points to the importance of Istanbul throughout his experiences with Pride activism and participating in Pride Parades. For him, the significance of the space of Pride activism and in terms of general LGBTI politics, reveals itself through comparing it to different cities:

“Yes we live within four walls but most of us also don’t want to live this way. We need to advocate something and we should think of this on the basis of cities. You socialize easily in İstanbul, organize parades and so on, but if you live in Eskişehir, for I am talking about eight years ago, you go and join by having considered your friends and community. Especially for the parade, well I am

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<sup>105</sup> “...e herkes geldi bi sürü artist şarkıcı falan. Gönül ister ki Bülent de Gelseydi çünkü Taksime vefa borcu var onun.”

### **Neden Taksim’e?**

“Yani biz hep ordaydık. Orda buluşurduk, orda Gezi’de çarka çıkardık, müşteri bulurduk orda, eğlenirdik ve şiddete uğrardık. Cihangir’de, Abanoz’da, Tarlabası’nda yaşadık. Ya nerde olacaktı?”

<sup>106</sup>“Lezbiyenler çok Lambda’da sosyalleşmezdik, daha çok Taksim’de barlarda falan takılırdık.”

from Aydın, it would be more possible for me in Eskişehir I was out there then, I would think twice in Aydın.”<sup>107</sup>

As I have not asked any questions regarding the relationship of emotions and spaces of activism during the interviews, I came to realize that it was due to my own putative way of approaching to the topic. The reason for that would be the inevitability of Pride Parades started to be held in İstiklal, as the preoccupying idea. Hence I have naturalized the reasons of such an activist practice in İstiklal and later in Ankara, as the movement itself have started to be formed within the same regions.

However, whilst Belgin emphasizes, the un-imaginability of its occurrences in another space, or as Ferhat’s comments that even if it did it would require himself to consider participating twice; I might be confident to assert that these causal relations with the space and activism is being overturned for the last two years. The demonstrations in Mersin, Denizli, Bursa, Çorum and İzmir under the name of Pride Parades are the indicators of such an overturn. So, this study further requires an investigation of the affective dimension of these other Pride Parades in different cities in Turkey in a comparative fashion.

### **3.3.2. Temporality**

Collins argues that the collective gathering of a social movement is a site for emotional amalgamation operating in a social ritual (2001: 29). As a distinct form of activism different from the activities in the rest of the year, my fieldwork revealed that Pride Parades are providing instances for people to realize the peak of such amalgamated emotions. The significant timing of the parades in the last week of June is not independent from its internationality. For Sinan, Pride Parades are when the movement in Turkey gains an international position among other Pride’s in other geographies:

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<sup>107</sup> “Evet dört duvar arasında yaşıyoruz ama birçoğumuz da böyle yaşamak istemiyor. Bir şeyleri savunmamız gerekiyor. Bunu da şehir bazında düşünmeliyiz. İstanbul’da daha kolay sosyalleşiyorsun, yürüyüş falan yapıyorsun ama Eskişehir’de, 8 yıl öncesinden bahsediyorum, arkadaşlarını ve içinde bulunduğun çevreyi baz alarak gidiyorsun. Yürüyüş özelinde de, hani ben Aydınliyım, Eskişehirde açık olduğumdan daha mümkün belki ama, Aydın’da olsa iki defa düşünürdüm.”

“Pride Parades show the strength of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey. It provides an international quality. Besides it became a symbol throughout the history. All the endeavors through the year consolidates the excitement it creates. There are no series of events in the rest of the year as compact as this.”<sup>108</sup>

For most of my informants this international linkage creates a sense of concentration of both emotional and physical energy for the organization of Pride Parades. The timing of the parades was indeed planned according to the annual gathering for the commemoration of the atrocities against LGBTI community in Christopher Street, NY in 1969, yet what strikes my curiosity the most is why and how the concentration of emotional forces for people to pursue Pride activism is so much identified with such symbolism, and what would change if the parades took place in a different time of the year. Cihan answers this question as:

“As these parades became bigger, it came with a side effect as an integration to the international Pride tourism. As I have mentioned, participation of people from Europe, that flag they brought along with the increasing numbers of people not only from Istanbul but also from other cities in Turkey, have indicated that this is not just a local situation. After 2007, the Parade committee became more exciting and lively as you can see more people willing to volunteer in, than the rest of the year. I mean, people experience explosion of creativity which cannot be foreseen. It feels like you are a part of something bigger which have an international legitimacy. I do respect the local forms of activism but this is something celebrated all around the world. Besides, it is done in front of public which lets anyone who has issues with gender and sexuality to join, instead of just the LGBTI base of the movement.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> “Onur Yürüyüşü hareketin gövde gösterisi. Harekete uluslararası bir nitelik katıyor. Ayrıca sene boyunca harcanan çabalar da yarattığı heyecan duygusunu artırıyor. Senenin geri kalanında bu kadar kompakt bir etkinlik serisi yapılmıyor.”

<sup>109</sup> “Bu yürüyüşler büyüdükçe, uluslararası Pride turizmine de katılmak gibi bir yan etkisi oldu. Dediğim gibi, Avrupadan insanların gelmesi, o getirdikleri bayrak, sadece İstanbul’dan değil diğer şehirlerden de insanların gelmesiyle artan katılımcı sayısı bunun sadece yerel bir durum olmadığını gösterdi. 2007den sonra Prdie komitesi daha bir heyecanlı ve hareketli olmaya başladı ve senenin geri kalanından daha çok insanın katıldığını görebilirsin. Yani insanlar öngörülemez bir yaratıcılık patlaması yaşıyor. Şey, böyle daha büyük bir şeyin parçasıymışsın gibi bir his yaşıyorsun ve hani uluslararası meşruiyeti var. Yerel aktivizm şekillerine de saygı duyuyorum ama bu tüm dünyada kutlanan birşey. Ayrıca bu herkesin gözü önünde yapılıyor ve toplumsal cinsiyetle sorunu olan herkesin katılmasını sağlıyor, sadece LGBTI tabanını değil hareketin.”

So besides the senses of being part of a bigger movement through its international significance, Cihan points to a feature of Pride Parades as a time where and when people are experiencing forms of empowerment and liberation which also Yeşim and Ülkü are arguing about. While Yeşim states that Pride Parades are when people could temporally feel the dignity which is socially deprived off them and senses of community, Ülkü points to its carnivalesque attraction for those who wouldn't be a part of any form of activism during the rest of the year:

“People experience dignity and community, perhaps only there for the first time in their lives. Even for a day for a few hours.” (Yeşim)<sup>110</sup>

“Well they come to this more of course because it is more like a carnival. There are parties and such but participating in this is something different because you're open and in front of everyone. In İstanbul, costumes, colors... This is an unusual situation in Turkey and it is created in front of everyone even for a day.” (Ülkü)<sup>111</sup>

So the momentarily provided emotional renderings and the sense of being a part of a bigger picture create an energy that enables people to participate both in the organization committee and in the Parade itself; differently from the other forms of activism carried out in the LGBTI Movement in Turkey.

### 3.3.3. Ideology

I have started to think about the relations of emotions and ideology, first when Ferhat was talking about the hardships and challenges they faced as the Pride committee of 2014 with AK LGBTI<sup>112</sup>. Throughout my fieldwork, the only narrated political and ideological

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<sup>110</sup> “İnsanlar hayatlarında belki de onur ve topluluk hislerini ilk defa orada yaşıyorlar. Bir günlüğüne, bir kaç saatliğine olsa dahi...”

<sup>111</sup> “Ya buna daha çok geliyorlar tabi çünkü bu biraz daha karnavalımsı. Partiler falan oluyor tabi ama buna katılmak başka bir şey çünkü açıkta, herkesin önündesin. İstanbul'dasın, kostümler renkler... Türkiye'de pek alışık olduğumuz bir durum değil ve bir günlüğüne de olsa herkesin gözü önünde yaratılıyor.”

<sup>112</sup> AK LGBTI is a group organized first after the Gezi Resistance. The group consists of LGBTI individuals who claim their support for the AKP government. The group's political

affiliations of LGBTI Movement in Turkey were those with the socialists, feminist, anarchists and anti-militarists. Hence it is critical to pose a few questions here, not to make an assertion but to open up for a new space of discussion. Can we speak of an ideology of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey? Can we consider what Pride activism aims to achieve in terms of visibility and social political advocacy of equality, justice and rights activism as ideological? Having built the links with those social political groups I have listed above, why don't we talk about the relations of Kemalism, ultra-nationalism or Islamism with LGBTI activism in affinitive terms?

As the movement improved and its organizational span has increased in terms of various groupings, it is possible to talk about the emergence of groups with different political affiliations such as Kemalist LGBTI's and Muslim LGBTI's and now we have AK LGBTI recently. So the spectrum of ideological links the LGBTI politics had created for the last 25 years demonstrates a multi-sided ideological positioning. Massumi (1995) considers ideology in both its common sensical usage as the belief structures along with the positions people take vis-à-vis the social political context. So in terms of the subject positioning to the conjuncture, the LGBTI Movement in general could be considered interpellative in terms of the civil rights advocacy against the heteronormative violence however is this enough to call it ideology of the movement? Which belief structures are being included and excluded in this politics? As Ferhat narrates his experiences of the conflict with AK LGBTI through the organization of 2014 Pride Parade over the debate around opening group banners, he also directs me to think about this sense of inclusion and exclusion:

“We don't have to embrace everyone and everything. There are ülkücü fags, capitalist fags... But as the Pride committee do we have to receive them with open arms just to have them participate in the parade? There is a thing called parade safety and we provide it. Its death if ever these groups get into a fight.”<sup>113</sup>

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framing of LGBTI issues in Turkey revolves mostly around religiosity and social conservatism as a critique to the LGBTI Movement's asserted support of deprivation of morality, family values and religion. Linking their social imaginaries to AKP's conservative politics around social norms they claim to grasp an understanding of collaboration and possibility of LGBTI existence with the social morals and religion.

<sup>113</sup> “Her şeye herkese kucak açmak zorunda değiliz. Ülkücü ibnesi de var, kapitalisti de... Ama biz Onur komitesi olarak sırf gelsinler diye bunlara kucak açmak zorunda mıyız?”

So this comment reveals that LGBTI activism in general cannot be solely identified with sexual freedom and equality but with a range of other political attachments such as activism against fascism, nationalism and capitalism. The complexity of the issue of emotions and ideology within the LGBTI Movement in Turkey arouses at this point. It is a movement that consist of many different ideological perceptions towards the emancipatory activism. Whereas those who appear to be forming the main body of the movement, I mean the organizations which vividly pursues activism in this field give the sense that the movement itself is more situated in and affiliated with left side of the politics. What are the ideological decisive mechanisms of such a social groups in terms of political activism? Where can we see other challenges to its mainstream ideological links? Can emotions within this environment be ideological? Or is it the historical development of the LGBTI community making practices paved the way for such an ideological composition of feminism, anti-capitalism, anti-militarism and anarchism? Is it the emotional transductions that have been built throughout the history of the movement created such conflicts today?

### **3.4. Shame and *Onur***

As for the last topic of my thesis I believe it is important to voice Ferhat's and Deniz's uneasy relationship with the concept of *onur*, since their statements about the meanings of *onur* within LGBTI activism in Turkey, are actually a hot debate among various other activists in various geographies and among scholars who delve into the notion of shame in relation to LGBTI pride which is politically produced and proliferated since the Stonewall Riots in 1969. To remember what they have stated in terms of the meanings of *onur* for them, Ferhat says that:

“Onur and such like are too sharp for me, like morality and purity. So what? Am I saving my honor?”<sup>114</sup>

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Yürüyüş güvenliği diye bişey var ve biz sağlıyoruz bunu. Ölüm yani orda iki grup kavga etse...”

<sup>114</sup> “Onur falan çok keskin şeyler benim için; ahlak, namus gibi. Ne yani? Onurumu mu kurtarıyorum?”

While Ferhat expresses his unease with what onur connotes in terms of socially valued norms around being moral and honorable, Deniz argues against onur and his choice of using pride vis-à-vis dignity as onur signify as was depicted in the second chapter:

“I was always against Onur. I prefer naming it Gurur. I have never supported Onur but it was called Onur once. It feels like you are complying with everyone’s understanding of Onur, whose onur, what’s onur...”

### **What do you mean by complying?**

“I mean, we need to do this; refuse it and choose our own way and get into the situation ourselves where we would reflect ourselves. I mean, if we get into the situation of someone permitting us, granting us with rights, look we are also honorable and so on... I mean, we situate ourselves as always demanding rights and justice and always waiting for someone for permission. We need to give up demanding rights and permits. Hence, I like the slogans such ‘We are Here, Get Used to It’ more.”<sup>115</sup>

Although none of these statements directly refers to shame as the language of LGBTI politics, their attribution of the social constructedness of onur or being honorable, leads us to the assimilative qualities of pride in LGBTI politics. In his famous book called ‘Gay Shame’, David Halperin (2009) approach pride and Pride activism in a critical manner. He states that Pride activism employs political charges such as “liberation, legitimacy, dignity, acceptance and assimilation as well as the right to be different” in order to de-stigmatize being LGBTI through avoiding the asserted shame inflicted upon individuals (2009: 3). However, he points to the ongoing debates of the assimilative function of pride through defining certain ways of ‘properness’ and purporting senses of normativity around the notion of proud LGBTI

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<sup>115</sup> “Ben Onura her zaman karşıydım. Gurur demeyi tercih ederim. Onur’u hiç desteklemedim ama Onur Yürüyüşü denilmişti bir defa. Orda hani herkesin Onur kavramına ayak uydurmuş oluyorsun yani, neye göre onur kime göre onur.”

### **Ayak uydurmakla ne kastediyorsun?**

“Yani bizim şunu yapmamız gerekiyo; şöyle elimizin tersiyle itip, kendi yolumuzu kendimiz seçmemiz ve kendi baktığımız noktada yansıtma durumuna kendimiz girmemiz gerekiyor. Yani birinin bize izin verme, birinin bize bir hak verme durumunun içine girsek, bakın biz de onurluyuz falan diye... Yani hep hak bekleyen adalet bekleyen hep birinden izin bekleyen bi durumun içine girmiş oluruz. Yani izin istemekten hak istemekten vazgeçmemiz gerekiyor. O nedenle ‘Alışın Burdayız’ gibi sloganlar daha hoşuma gidiyor”

(Halperin, 2009). The point he criticizes Pride activism for its normative connotations drives from the popular and mainstream stereotypification of LGBTI's who are keen on safe sex, well built, healthy bodies and so on. What falls out of these margins, namely those with "wrong bodies, sadomasochistic orientations, sex workers, drags, boy-lovers, bisexuals, immigrants, the poor and the disabled" (9) are setting up the new categories of shame which are not referred to within the concept of pride.

He does talk about the US context mostly but, thinking of these categories in the local LGBTI Movement, relying on my own experiences with activism and the events I have joined so far, these categories are often debated among activists through panels and workshops. One vivid example I can give, is this event I have participated in 2010 Pride Week, in which various activists have prepared a porn video that is alternative and critical to the mainstream, male oriented and heterosexual pornography. After the video screening of this alternative porn and a sadomasochistic sex video, a series of workshops took place to talk about sadomasochism and violence. Yet, turning back to the participants' testimonies, especially Belgin's, transsexuality, bi-phobia, and dissidence against sex workers was an issue for the early period of organizational activism:

"I told so, everyone was gay and lesbian they said. So trans' wouldn't come, sex workers are bogies and bi-phobia... As if we were not befitting there."<sup>116</sup>

In this manner, various scholars such as Halperin (2009) as I have indicated, Sally Munt (2000), Claire Hemmings (2005) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) have approach to this issue within the Pride activism in general, through posing questions such as "are there anything that shame can offer us politically?" or "can we do things that we can't do with pride?" (Halperin, 2009:4). Sedgwick asserts that the "therapeutic or political strategies aimed directly at getting rid of individual or group shame or undoing it, have something prosperous about them. They may work but they cannot work in the way they say they work" (2003:62). The unease with Pride Ferhat and Deniz openly indicates is not about what it aims at but about the way it affirms itself upon LGBTI identities. As I have noted earlier, pride

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<sup>116</sup> "Dedim ya! Herkes gey ve lezbiyen dediler. İşte translar gelmezdi, seks işçileri öcülerdi, bifobi falan...Sanki yakışmıyorduk."

provides a “pedagogy” of political behavior for LGBTI’s in Turkey. Through its discursive resonances in terms of humaneness, visibility, coming out, justice, equality and protection it projects a social transformation. However, this is yet a political discourse of LGBTI Movement in Turkey as well as internationally, which has a historical background of socialization, politicization and confrontation against the heteronormative systems. It is a manufactured language of political imaginary and a standpoint for LGBTI activists against the atrocities and marginalization. Therefore political engagement with the concepts of onur or pride may not reveal to everyone. What about claiming the margins? What about making visible the “shameful” existences instead of those with pride or onur?

In the 2015 Pride Parade, which could not take place, I happened to see this placard in the shape of a pink heart with “SHAME” written on it. It was the first time that I come across with such a slogan in the Pride Parades in Turkey. Despite the political claims of pride on LGBTI psyche, social shaming or the fear of it, is the most common emotional situation LGBTI’s inhabit. Through the end of May, Yeşim has invited me to Lambdaİstanbul to give a brief presentation on the history of LGBTI Movement in Turkey and to join the later events. These events were organized for people who would like to work with and volunteer in Lambdaİstanbul as an orientation for LGBTI activism. One of the sessions was about coming out as LGBTI. As the participants were asked why you would prefer coming out and why not, one of them gave the answer as:

“I wouldn’t come out because I don’t need to. I don’t want to face with the complications and reactions.”

During the break for the next session, after I reminded my position as a researcher to Yeşim and to the person who made this statement; I kept thinking that being an LGBTI is also being able to live with its facts. As those who deemed to be the shameful and failed subjects of the heteronormative sociality as Halberstam (2011) and Ahmed (2010) states; we tend to find our own ways within these oppressive structures and form our senses of identity and collectivity vis-à-vis coming out as a political project of Pride activism. Sedgwick brilliantly puts it as “the forms taken by shame (and fear in the context of my fieldwork) are not distinct ‘toxic’ parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised, they are instead integral to and residual in the process by which identity itself is formed” (2003:63). Hence through the

empathy and the sense of shared experiences, shame and related affects can also be both embodied and psychological sources of political action and group formation through de-pathologizing and losing its ties with depression (Cvetkovich), unhappiness (Ahmed, 2010) and marginalization (Halperin, 2009); not necessarily by turning them into positive feelings like pride, motivation or as Deniz supports, without demanding any sort of acceptance.

## CHAPTER 4:

### CONCLUSIONS

In this research I initially aimed to elaborate the relationship between affects and political activism in the context of LGBTI Pride Weeks in Turkey. However, during my fieldwork, I have realized that a retrospective affect analysis is quite a challenge in terms of tracing the unarticulated, bodily manifestations of affects. Hence, I have realized that prolonging my research after this thesis to be able to participate and observe the affectivity of Pride activism was necessary. As the result of the limitations of an MA thesis, my research has evolved into an analysis of articulated, politically evaluated emotions related to Pride Parades and Pride activism in general. Within this process, I had a chance to conceptualize what *onur* means politically and emotionally as it has not been conceptualized by the LGBTI Movement and studies in Turkey so far. When I asked what *onur* means, the common narrative of activists I have interviewed revealed the pedagogic and discursive dimensions of the term *onur*. Through the transfer of memories and testimonies of activists, I came to the conclusion that *onur* has become a political discourse of LGBTI activism regardless of its conventional meanings related to emotions such as pride and dignity.

In the first chapter, I tried to position the political meaning the term *onur* is loaded through the 25 years of LGBTI activism vis-à-vis its contemporary equivalent pride. Pride connects to over the sentiments of not being ashamed of who one is in terms of sexuality and gender identity and was developed as a political project through the 1970's in North America. In the 1980s and 90s it was reframed as a sentiment reflecting the accomplishments of the

movement's effort to counter the bodily and social outcomes of the AIDS epidemic. Meanwhile as LGBTI activism started taking shape in Turkey in the 1990s, *onur* came to be adopted as a key concept. Yet, there was almost no public debate on the term itself until the 2000s. Through the experiences of participating in May 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> demonstrations and the affinities built with various political groups such as feminists, anarchists, anti-militarists and socialists, after the first Pride Parade, *onur* came to be known as a sentiment referring to opposition against inequalities, violence and oppression against LGBTI individuals. Therefore I argue that, *onur* has been a way of politicizing LGBTI identity. According to my participants, *onur* resonates with confrontation, existence and humaneness. In other words, *onur* has become one of the tenets of activism to address the issues of violence, injustice and discrimination against LGBTI's and has led to the biggest event of the LGBTI Movement in Turkey. Conceptualizing *onur* as such, I continued on providing a historicity of Pride activism in Turkey, depicting its development, challenges and massification. Perhaps the biggest development in Pride activism since 1993, after the prohibited Pride Parade was the recurrence of confrontational activism in 2003. Having realized the possibility of carrying out an action on the streets over specifically LGBTI issues had encouraged people to organize further. The thesis has also shown through such historical moments as the Lambdaİstanbul closure case and Gezi Resistance, Pride activism has experienced solidarity politics to the utmost level. These formations of solidarity have resulted in the first massive participation in 2007 Pride Parade; then by coupling every year in its number of participants, in 2013, after the Gezi Resistance, numbers reached an estimated number of hundred thousand. However, within this progress, I have touched upon some challenges such as the banner problem. According to my participants, carrying a banner of a political organization or group has always been a controversial issue within Pride activism. It was considered as an intervention of socialist movements in order to integrate LGBTI issues into its own politics (for instance by Cihan and Deniz) or as a disruptive act against the overarching manner of rainbow flag. Though, for some of my research participants such as Belgin and Yeşim, because of the size of the movement and the parades have today, it is inevitable to have different organizational banners. Another challenge was the trans-misogyny within the LGBTI groups which for Belgin eventually led to the separation of Trans Pride that is being organized for the last 6 years.

In the third chapter, I wanted to analyze the emotional dimensions of Pride activism within this historicity. Overall, I tried to set up an understanding of subjectivity within the definition of activism and being activist from the point of ‘emotional capital’ in relation to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. I argue that the emotional capital of LGBTI activists is related to the emotional habitus of the people engaging in activism. I analyzed how the emotional habitus of LGBTI activists shape the organization of Pride Parades and how the general social political conjuncture shaped their emotional habitus. In this thesis, I approached Pride activism in Turkey with a focus on emotions, analyzing its detachment from a dichotomous relationship between pride and shame. *Onur* within LGBTI Movement in Turkey is not construed as a vice or a hierarchical signifier of a person’s status in a society. Rather it generates values and feelings around freedom from heteronormative oppression. It is a political framework for my participants that leads them pursue activism towards equality, solidarity, justice, non-violence and humaneness which works together with fear and anxiety. The emotional habitus created through the relatively short history of LGBTI Movement in Turkey, is a varying concept in itself. In this chapter, I tried to relate emotional habitus to the background of activists’ social, economic and political identities and to show how the diverse emotional habitus among political activists became concentrated around certain emotions such as solidarity, community feelings, enthusiasm and motivation in certain contexts like the closure case of Lambdaİstanbul in 2007 or anti-war demonstrations in 2003. These concentrated emotions, I argue, are very much intrinsic to the mobilizing discourse of *onur*, becoming a stemming point of Pride activism in Turkey.

This thesis has argued that the simultaneity of seemingly contradictory feelings constitute the source of LGBTI political activism, as Yeşim expressed so succinctly: “why would we organize a parade if we weren’t afraid?” My fieldwork shows that the emotional habitus of the activists engaging in Pride activism creates certain political openings and opportunities and shape the framework for both confronting exclusion and discrimination as well as advocating a social transformation.

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