

NEGOTIATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS AND ALLIANCES:  
QUEER PEOPLE OF COLOR AND TURKISH MIGRANTS IN BERLIN



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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mehmet Tunay Altay, certify that

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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## ABSTRACT

### Negotiating Community Engagements and Alliances: Queer People of Color and Turkish Migrants in Berlin

This thesis focuses on the relationship between queer people of color communities and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants in Berlin to understand how the perception of race/ethnicity plays a role in forming political alliances. In doing so, the thesis is centered on three main questions: "How do QPoC politics and place-making practices influence new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' mobility in Berlin?", "What are the impacts of QPoC on new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' understanding of race and ethnicity?", and finally "What are the impacts of QPoC communities on new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' understanding of solidarity and transnational alliance?". Qualitative research of this thesis involves in-depth interviews with twelve participants between 24 and 33 years old, qualitative content analysis, and participant observation. The findings of this thesis argue that the experience of the participants as a group of racially ambiguous new migrants in Berlin complicates the binary distinction between "white" and "person of color" both in participants spatial interactions with QPoC safe space strategies and in their racial / ethnic self-identification. Moreover, this thesis shows that the study of critical ethnicity and identity have to take into consideration the racial dynamics of migrants' "homeland". Overall, the ambivalent relationship between the participants and the QPoC challenges to the classic representation of Turkish migrants as being stuck "between-two-worlds" and discusses that the participants have expanded to multiple trans-local activities interconnected with other urban minority groups under QPoC in Berlin.

## ÖZET

### Toplumsal Gruplar Arası Katılım ve İttifak Müzakereleri: Berlin'deki Beyaz-Olmayan Queer Gruplar ve Türkiyeli Göçmenler Arası Etkileşimler

Bu tez çalışması, Berlin'deki beyaz-olmayan queer gruplarla (tez içerisinde "QPoC" olarak anılmaktadır, İngilizce ifadesi ile "queer people of color") Türkiye'li yeni gelen LGBTQ göçmenlerin etkileşimlerini ırk ve etnik kimlik algısının yönetimi ve politik ittifak oluşumu özelinde incelemektedir. Bu inceleme kapsamında tez çalışması üç temel soruya yönelmektedir: "QPoC grupların politikaları ve alan-yaratım pratikleri Türkiye'li yeni gelen LGBTQ göçmenleri nasıl etkilemektedir?", "QPoC grupları Türkiye'li yeni gelen LGBTQ göçmenlerin ırk ve etnik kimlik algısının oluşumunu nasıl etkilemektedir?", ve son olarak "QPoC gruplar ile Türkiye'li yeni gelen LGBTQ göçmenler arasında dayanışma ve ülkelerötesi ittifak müzakereleri nasıl gerçekleşmektedir?". Bu tez çalışması kapsamında 24 ile 33 yaşları arasında oniki katılımcıyla derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş, nitelikli içerik analizleri yapılmış ve katılımcı gözlemcilik faaliyetlerinde bulunulmuştur. Bu tez bulguları ışığında, etnik olarak kuşkulu addedilen grupların, Berlin'deki beyaz ve beyaz-olmayan olarak kutuplaştırılan ırksal kimlik anlayışında karmaşa yarattığı anlaşılmaktadır. Bu karmaşa, katılımcıların Berlin'deki QPoC güvenli alan deneyimlerinde ve Berlin'de kendi ırk ve etnik kimliklerini konumlandırmalarında görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, katılımcıların kuşkulu addedilen etnik kimlikleri ve QPoC gruplarla kurdukları değişken etkileşimler Türkiyeli göçmenlerin iki-dünya-arasında sıkışmış temsilini redderek, çoklu ve yerelötesi etkileşimlerin olduğu yeni bir ittifak cephesini işaret etmektedir.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the endless curiosity of being in-between.



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“I used to have this recurrent dream for years that I would alternatively become black and white and black and white over and over and over again... It felt really good. But I’ve never quite figured out all of what it meant...”

(Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981)

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On November 4, 2018, Silverfuture, one of Berlin's most frequented queer-fem bars, hosted a solidarity event in support of Lux, an activist woman with trans experience who moved to Berlin from Brazil. Lux had recently lost her job at a restaurant in Berlin due to her being diagnosed with HIV. The event had a long list of performers from House of Living Colors, one of Berlin's first Queer People of Color (QPoC) drag performance groups. The evening started with a lip sync show and continued with a live violin solo and poetry performance by Kub, a queer performer from Turkey. The event appeared as one of the many QPoC oriented solidarity events, but in that particular night Lux stepped to the stage and started a monologue on what solidarity meant to her as a queer person of color in Berlin, especially at this point in her life where she was most vulnerable and dispossessed from the institutions which are supposed to safeguard her wellbeing. She began with the story of her immigration, her life in Brazil and the compromises she made to be in Berlin. Lux later added in tears, "Follow what is happening in Brazil, follow what is happening in Turkey, know which kind of realities we are coming from; support does not need an event; we all need each other." Right before the event, a Turkish LGBTQ group, Kuir Lubun Berlin, organized its first public meeting with more than fifty Turkish LGBTQ people. As it is stated in the group's social media profile, the community is meant "for lubunyas and queers who found themselves in Berlin, with a little touch of Turkey, Turkish language, or *Türkiyelilik* somewhere in their background" (Kuir Lubun Berlin, 2018).<sup>1</sup> After the six-hour long meeting, some members were at Lux's

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<sup>1</sup> To read the details of the *Türkiyeli* discourse in Berlin's LGBTQ activism, please see Petzen's *Home or Homelike Turkish Queers Manage Space in Berlin* (2004).

solidarity event. Lux was not aware of the Turkish crowd when she invited the audience for support and Kuir Lubun Berlin was not aware of Lux's story before the event. Lux's event was a call for a shared political responsiveness among queer people of color, a community that is shaped around racialized experiences of LGBTQ migrants and people with migration histories.

The QPoC acronym stands as an umbrella term that is used conjointly with concepts, such as QPoC politics, QPoC communities, QPoC places, QPoC movement, QPoC critique, and QPoC identity. In general, QPoC may define a person being both "queer" in terms of falling under the categories of LGBTQ+ and "of color," which, in a broad sense, covers the people from anywhere in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Indigenous peoples of Australasia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Indian Pacific, and Roma, Sinti, and people of mixed ancestry/origin (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Helms, 1995). The use of QPoC acronym refers to the various intersectional LGBTQ social justice movements that are sometimes presented as queer, black, indigenous, people of color (QBIPoC), men of color (MoC), queer, trans, inter, black, indigenous and people of color (CuTie.BIPoC), or queer, trans, people of color (QTPoC). I chose the QPoC acronym due to its vast popularity among research participants, as well as its strong presence in Berlin.

This thesis is centered on the experiences of new wave (used in Turkish as *yeni gelenler*) Turkish LGBTQ<sup>2</sup> migrant community and their relationship with QPoC communities in Berlin for two reasons. Firstly, the German SCIP-project has revealed that the new wave of highly educated Turkish migrants perceive higher percentage of ethnic discrimination compared to earlier immigration waves (Verkuyten, 2016). According to this study, the ethnic discrimination is attributed to

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<sup>2</sup> LGBTQ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (one's sexual identity). The use of this particular acronym does not mean to exclude other sexual orientations, gender identity and gender expressions.

the fact that new migrants are confronted with discrimination in societal domains, for example, while searching for a job, in schools or when applying for a flat, which creates socioeconomic barriers that are difficult to overcome. This experience with ethnic discrimination leads Turkish migrants to seek for support in ethnic communities. However, the experience of LGBTQ migrants differs as they try to avoid homophobia and other exclusionary behavior among heterosexist ethnic community groups. These factors play an important role to understand the interactions between QPoC and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants. Secondly, the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' as individuals arriving from a non-West but also non-colonial country complicates the understanding of PoC and whiteness in Berlin's context and provides a spotlight to investigate the boundary drawing practices as a group that stands in-between and unsure.

The use of "Turkish people" does not aim to undermine the ethnic and racial diversity for people from Turkey. The sole aim of listing research participants as Turkish is to categorize a group of participants who hold Turkish citizenship. Since this work critically handles the ethnic and racial positioning of Turkish people, I utilize the word "Turk" to mention the ethnic identity and carefully differentiate the use of Turkish people and Turk. The literature on Turkish migrants in Europe sometime uses the term Turk and Turkish people divergently and in very distinct cases uses *Türkiyeli* (Eng. "from Turkey or Turkish people") to avoid misrepresenting other ethnic and racial groups in Turkey, such as Armenians, Kurds, Roma people under Turk category (Petzen, 2004). Since the use of Turk, *Türkiyeli* play a crucial part in the screening of my research data, I hold Turkish people as a neutral indicator that is connected to citizenship ties with Turkey and nothing else.

The notion of intersectionality (Cooper, 2015; Crenshaw, 2018; Lutz, Herrera Vivar, & Supik, 2011; McCall, 2005) comes into question throughout my work in

two major ways. Firstly, intersectionality appears as a conceptual framework that shapes QPoC's core value of dealing with the complexity of multiple oppressive structures which appear in relation to concepts, such as gender, race, sexuality (Bacchetta, El-Tayeb, & Haritaworn, 2015; Helms, 1995). This general framework of intersectionality makes multiple grounds of oppression visible and expands on the works of scholar's like Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jennifer Nash, and Jaspir Puar. Although the term observes different interpretations, the fundamental proposal of intersectionality's critique is that examining any one form of oppression as compartmentalized in isolated identity categories, such as sex, gender, race, and sexual orientation, fails to represent the complex and inseparable realities and experiences that deal with multiple forms of oppression in various aspects.

Taking from Leslie McCall's (2005) critique of using gender as a single analytical category and her call for introducing the relationship between "...multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (p. 1771), I approached intersectionality as a way to disentangle intersection and complex social relations that new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants experience in Berlin. To further develop what constitutes a complex social relation, McCall (2005) defines the methodological problem in studying complexity that "...arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis" (p.1772). Reflecting on the case of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, the intersecting social factors that interfere with their everyday life, the dynamic exchange between their experience in Turkey and Berlin, and finally their self-reflective and deconstructive approaches regarding the contested identity categories, such as "new wave" or "Turk" encouraged me to look for tool of analysis that would answer these complexities. Therefore, I use McCall's (2005) intersectionality in this work as a tool of analysis and expand more on the use of this approach in my

methodology chapter.

Entering into this complex research field, QPoC communities in Berlin stand as platforms for new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants to form intimate and empowering relationships with other ethnic and racial minority groups in Berlin. However, these intimate and empowering relationships between QPoC communities and the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants do not form a stable state of coexistence or harmony. On the contrary they are the outcome of difficult coalition work that push the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants to critically evaluate their ethnic and racial position and other social factors, such as socioeconomic background and influences of historic elements like nationalism and colonialism.

In order to explore the potential of the aforementioned relationship, I ask the following questions:

1. How do QPoC politics and place-making practices influence new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' mobility in Berlin?
2. What are the impacts of QPoC politics on the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' understanding of race and ethnicity?
3. What are the impacts of QPoC communities on new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' understanding of solidarity and transnational alliance?

Given the indicative focus of this work on new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and their interaction with QPoC communities in Berlin, the empirical study of this work offers an insight on how new wave Turkish migrants are perceived by certain German media outlets and their experience with the host-county, which is detailed in the methodology chapter.

Before proceeding, I must raise one caveat. The use of white and whiteness does not aim to reify the multiplicity and complexity of whiteness and how they are experienced in Berlin for people from Russia, or Eastern Italy. However, the strong

emphasis on whiteness during my ethnographic work as an over-arching representation of racial and ethnic structures offers a particular understanding of the term. It is important to note that the purpose of this research is not to make prescriptive claims on how new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants should be correctly racially classified. On the contrary, the purpose of this work is to understand the limits between white and PoC distinction in Berlin and how this limit affects the experience of new migrants as they experience the racial differentiation in Berlin's context.

### 1.1 Positionality

The work of solidarity and alliance among QPoC communities has usually been overlooked by academia, either because QPoC communities' success in creating safe spaces that are not accessible by white heterosexual public, or because of historical oppression and silencing that affect the visibility of QPoC presence. Either way, my position as a Turkish, LGBTQ, migrant has played a crucial role in my entry in to QPoC scene in Berlin. Writing about QPoC and Turkish LGBTQ migrants as a politically motivated researcher who has experienced racial and ethnic discrimination, as well as homophobia in Germany, my role as a researcher transcends the traditional understanding of "emphatic neutrality" and has extended to a more critical and postmodern genre where I channel my wish for advocacy and action into my work (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). My access to QPoC places and communities has motivated me to study the complex social realities that are taking part under the QPoC umbrella.

In Berlin, I first moved to Leinestrasse, a central area in the city's district of Neukölln. The neighborhood was affordable, central and hosted many Turkish markets, halal meat shops, computer service centers and countless number of

AyYildiz franchises, a phone service provider that offers free-of-charge Turkey-Germany calls. According to city statistics reported at the end of 2017, nearly 20 percent of Germans living in Neukölln come from immigrant families and a further 25 percent moved from another country, which makes more than 323,000 migrant inhabitants from more than 160 nations (Bezirksamt Neukölln, 2017). The visibility of a close-knit Turkish-speaking community fascinated me. After settling in and finding a job, I became more acquainted with Berlin's public transportation, and especially the U8, a subway line between Berlin's two most migrant-heavy neighborhoods: Wedding and Neukölln. In a recent news article from the Foreign Policy, Neukölln is described as a hub of immigration in Berlin and laboratory for the country's experiments with integration (Rayasam, 2016). Little do they know that Neukölln not only serves as a laboratory for Germany's experiments with integration but also a place where new multi-ethnic communities are formed and defined.

In the first couple of months of my arrival, I quickly found a vibrant Turkish LGBTQ community through my LGBTQ activist connections in Istanbul. Although the groups are not formed in strict structures, I took part in several LGBTQ Turkish-speaking meetings with people who moved to Berlin in recent years. My contacts with German-Turkish LGBTQ, especially the second- and third-generation German-born people with migration background proved fruitful contacts and urged me to question the representation of difference among different waves of immigration from Turkey to Germany.

My first interaction with QPoC places happened through my participation in English-speaking QPoC events. During these events, I witnessed thought-provoking dialogues on the future of the LGBTQ movement and realized how fragmented and varied the voices were, yet how united they all stood opposing the structures of racism, discrimination and violence. Hearing more about people defining themselves

as queer person of color, I had the opportunity to observe the variety of meaning that is behind the QPoC acronym. Considering the 160 nationalities that are only in the Neukölln neighborhood of Berlin, QPoC community appeared as a sort of middle ground where Black and/or African-Americans, Afro-Germans, South-Americans, Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Iranians, Vietnamese and many other migrants found place in Berlin. As Teresa de Lauratis (1984) says, "Experience is the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality..." (p.159). As a researcher with substantial experience with new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, I realized that QPoC places create complex interactions and dialogue, which impact the highly contested topics of racial/ethnic position in Europe and dynamics of moving in spaces as an LGBTQ migrant.

## 1.2 Literature review

A growing number of critical thinkers, such as Jin Haritaworn, Fatima El-Tayeb and Paola Bacchetta have worked to theorize Europe's QPoC communities. It is important to note that literature and critique on QPoC communities have explored the colliding categories of oppression in relations to race, ethnicity and sexuality, and gender identity. As I reference at the beginning of this chapter, US-centric reading of the QPoC movement and the literature stands on the legacy of black feminist scholars, particularly the works of Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde, Kimberlé Crenshaw. Before moving on to the recent literature, it has to be noted that "intersectionality" that is being utilized in this work refers to Crenshaw's (2018) work, which exposes the monolithic and central analysis of gender in approaching the overlapping and different social positions, relations, and oppressions. QPoC at its core is an attempt to create a multi-dimensional reading of the complex interrelations

between various identity categories (Cooper, 2015; Herrera Vivar, Lutz, & Supik, 2016; Lutz et al., 2011). As “queer people of color” at its core is an account of multiple grounds of oppressions that are manifested in relation to gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation, intersectionality is a critical tool to analyze its connection with the social world. Therefore, QPoC appear as a reflection on types of exclusionary behaviors, such as racial and ethnic discrimination within LGBTQ communities and heterosexism and homophobia in racial/ethnic communities.

I acknowledge the challenges of balancing the empirical specificity of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and establishing a theoretically meaningful framework while handling a multilayered analysis of various concepts, such as race, socio-economic class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion. As a crucial clarification, this work does not treat identity categories as separate components or separable analytics, nor does it aim to offer a static rendering of categories between the spectrum of white and PoC. This work aims to show the dynamic oppressive structures not only in identifying social realities of LGBTQ migrants, but also in creating political potentials to empower Europe’s new migrant communities.

One of the early ethnographic works that offers an analysis of the queer people of color in Europe is Fatima El-Tayeb’s monograph *European Others* (2011), which examines how ethnicization for LGBTQ people and politics work within Europe’s “post-national” framework where nation states and national identities have lost their importance. However, El-Tayeb claims the opposite by showing the rising ethnicization of minority population, especially around the topic of LGBTQ politics. According to El-Tayeb, QPoC groups “are usually presented as misfits within the strict identity ascriptions characterizing contemporary Europe” (El-Tayeb, 2011, p. 13). The *misfit* in El-Tayeb’s definition points out a moment of falling away from the image of ‘real’ Europeans. El-Tayeb’s cases on urban minority groups proves that the

experience of immigrants and other ethnic minority groups show a similar misfitting from an ideal.

El-Tayeb's inquiry of the urban minority groups shows that Europe's narrative of racelessness causes double treatment to those who experience racialization in their everyday lives and those who do not. This distinction demands a binary structure between those who are being racialized and those whose race is presented as irrelevant to their everyday life. This dialectical construction of "us" (white European identity) and "other" (racialized groups) is disturbed, particularly within the distinct with El-Tayeb's formulation of "queering ethnicity" which she explores with cases of multiethnic community-building: hip-hop crews, black and Muslim feminists, queer performers. These groups are all "...born out of shared, peculiar experience of embodying an identity that is declared impossible even though lived by millions, of constantly being defined as foreign to everything that is most familiar with." (p.167) QPoC appear as a way to break the silence around Europe's deeply racialized sense of self and to introduce a method of resistance, a new positionality that claims the impossible of being a queer migrant, or an ethnic minority who is destined to be presented as homophobic.

One of the key assumptions of El-Tayeb's work is the practical dilemma that Europe's racialized minorities find themselves in. The dilemma between two impossible options: firstly, to identify as an insider of the national community, and secondly to accept the outsider status and to identify as migrant and foreigner (El-Tayeb, 2011, p. 169). The first option leaves racialized groups in limbo where they are constantly reminded of their assigned status as other, and the second option puts them in a position where racialized groups are claiming a solidarity that is spatially not available to them, especially for the second- and third- generation migrants whose understanding of "homeland" or ethnic-roots is even more elusive. Following

these impossible options, El-Tayeb (2013) discusses that activists of color "queer" their positionality within a normative European model of national belonging by embodying an identity that is declared impossible. This dynamic relationship of queering ethnicity is crucial in understanding the function of QPoC as a category that renders a method of diversion as a form of ethnic identification without the ideal of a homeland. However, the question remains when the subject chooses one impossible option over another or face more impossibility within the QPoC model.

Another important source to explore QPoC politics in Europe is Jin Haritaworn's monograph *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* (2015). Haritaworn's work provides a unique inside to Berlin's gentrification debates with a reading of contemporary LGBTQ politics by offering an analysis of intersecting oppressive structures of race, sexual orientation, gender, socio-legal status, and socioeconomic background as observed in Berlin's gentrification debate.<sup>3</sup> In this work, one of Haritaworn's focal points is the binary representation of "proper queer subjects" and "homophobic people of color", the former coined with the category of white and the latter with being non-white (Bacchetta et al., 2015; Haritaworn, 2010). As an intervention of this opposing images of white queers and homophobic people of color, Haritaworn introduces a geographic strategy that is utilized by the queer people of color in Berlin, "whose nascent spatial narratives, while not rising to the status of a social movement, challenge a colonial account of queer space and safety, and propose alternative methods of place-making that do not rely on territorialization, securitization, displacement and dispossession" (p.3). The concept of "queer space and safety" appears a crucial point that defines the core value of QPoC place-making practices in Berlin. I used the term place-making practices as a

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<sup>3</sup> Jin Haritaworn prefers *they* pronoun for referring to them in third person. Their work explores how queers of color communities in Berlin and other places in Europe radicalize the perception of space and intervene with the story(ies) of European landscape.

bundle of networked processes, constituted by the socio-spatial relationships that link individuals together through a common place-frame (Pierce, Martin, & Murphy, 2011). Therefore, place-making refers to any type of activity that initiates a platform for a community network, such as QPoC panels, gatherings, online platforms.

The experiences of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants complicates Haritaworn's observation of QPoC's place-making practices. Although QPoC places claim to address anti-colonialism, anti-discrimination and other values that are addressed by Haritaworn, the experiences of Turkish people show that exclusion and conflict are still part of these places. In *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (2013), Christina B. Hanhardt explores the contested word "safety" and "safe space" by looking at the history of LGBTQ politics in San Francisco and New York City in 1960s to the 2000s. Although acknowledging the common (mis)conception of safety as "...a condition of no challenge or stakes, a state of being that might be best described as protectionist (or, perhaps, isolationist)" (p.30). Hanhardt argues that quest for safety requires an analysis of who or what constitutes a threat and why. By implementing this analysis, Hanhardt shows that isolationist measures are being taken under the name of safety, which poses a question to Haritaworn's QPoC place-making practices: who and what constitutes threat to QPoC places? In Haritaworn's designation of QPoC place-making practices, the threat is described as the colonial account of queer space and safety in Berlin, the factors that causes discrimination, exclusion, and dispossession of QPoC in Berlin. Where does new wave Turkish migrants stand in this isolationist/protectionist practices of place-making? As a striking example, many of research participants formulized their spatial interaction in QPoC places with the concept of "passing," as used in English form.

The particular usage of the term in practice of crossing between ethnic and

racial boundaries is nothing new. Passing in American literature refers to the process where a person of one race, gender, nationality, or sexual orientation adopts the guise of another (Ginsberg & Pease, 1996). Passing appears in the literature of Black liberation in the U.S. as Black slaves passing as white in order to gain their freedom (Ginsberg & Pease, 1996). In understanding the racial dynamics of a member of any 'inferior' group, one important example is John Howard Griffin's historic study *Black Like Me* (1961), which introduces Griffin, a white man, going through several physical procedures to adopt the guise of a Black man and travels to observe racism as experienced by Black people in the US. The context of my study shows that experience of passing differs from adopting the guise of another race, but it stands for the complex interactions that research participants face which leave them in ambiguity. Experiences of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants do not go through any physical adaptations, in contrast the meaning of their phenotype changes with the experience of immigration. Also, in Griffin's study, Griffin initiates an intentional process with the aspiration of understanding the Black experience in the US. On the other hand, new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' experience with passing occurs mostly consequentially, depending on factors that they hardly have control over.

Another similar study with the racial boundaries and passing is from the professor of linguistics Mary Bucholtz (2011) who works on the experiences of Latin Americans among the racial boundaries between black-brown and black-white in the U.S.. Bucholtz's exploration identifies the passing as "the active construction of how the self is perceived when one's ethnicity is ambiguous to others." She adds;

An individual may in certain contexts pass as a member of her 'own' biographical ethnic group by insisting on an identity that others may deny her. Furthermore, passing of this kind is not passive. Individuals of ambiguous ethnicity patrol their own borders, using the tools of language and self-representation to determine how the boundaries of ethnic categories are drawn upon their own bodies (Bucholtz, 352-53, as cited in Milian, 2013, p.

59).

Bucholtz's approach to passing offers key elements to analyze its interactive side: (1) experience of passing indicates that one's ethnicity is ambiguous to others, (2) passing is an active construction. This first element describes the setting of the passing; and in the second element, Bucholtz underlines that individuals in question are able to determine how the boundaries of ethnic categories are drawn upon their bodies. Reflecting back on the experience of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, participant's choice to address their racial experience with the concept of passing signals in-betweenness of Turkish experience in Berlin. However, their experience with passing occurs, not only in the setting of ethnic ambiguity to others, but also to themselves as they struggle to identify where their ethnic identity stands in white-PoC distinction in Berlin. Therefore, passing in this work stands closer to Bucholtz's study with the additional particularity of the ambiguous meaning of people of color-ness in Germany and the pre-perceived ideas of race and ethnicity among new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants in Berlin.

In exploring the dynamics of passing, racial self-identification and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' spatial interactions in Berlin, I utilized Neda Maghbouleh's *The Limits of Whiteness* (2017), a book that interrogates how Iranian Americans and other Middle Eastern Americans move across the color line of whiteness and non-whiteness. In this work, Maghbouleh (2017) explores how Iranian Americans navigate their racial status in different contexts and situations. The case of Iranians and most of ethnic Turk, new wave Turkish migrants are strikingly similar for two main reasons, Iranians and Turks have a self-perception of whiteness that is established with their national past. As a second similarity, Maghbouleh studies the racialization process where "immigration appears as battleground where in-between groups are browned" (p.7). In this respect, all new wave Turkish

migrants are facing this racial battleground where their liminal position is browned with racialized experiences in Berlin. The interaction between new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and QPoC appears as an example bottom-up racialization process, in which Turkish migrants experience whiteness and non-whiteness as reflected and made available in QPoC's places.

In Maghbouleh's work, racialization does not treat race as an unchanging reflection of biology and culture or a reflection of amalgamations of differently situated indicators like socioeconomic status and intermarriage; rather, race is a master status tied to group oppression and domination (2017, p. 6). In exploring further, Maghbouleh introduces two concepts: "Racial hinges," which captures how the geographic, political, and pseudoscientific specter of a racially liminal group, like Iranians, can be marshaled by a variety of legal and extralegal actors into a symbolic hinge that opens or closes the door of whiteness as necessary; and the second, "racial loopholes," which describes the everyday contradictions and conflicts that emerge when a group's racial categorization is inconsistent with its on-the-ground experience of racialization. The concept of racial loopholes is similar to what El-Tayeb calls as "misfit" which describes (non)action showing that certain people are not in their "proper place", meaning that their assigned places within the strict racialized identity ascriptions of Europe (El-Tayeb, 2011). Both El-Tayeb and Maghbouleh focus on racial experiences in predominantly white spaces and define how racialization works in relation to the power dynamics of a given society.

Reflecting back to the topic of passing, new wave Turkish LGBTQ's experience in-between whiteness, and people of coloriness adds to the racial hinges as the doors of whiteness and people of coloriness open and close with certain uncontrollable and involuntary circumstances. These racial hinges not only destabilize the in-group, out-group bordering practices, but also influences new wave

Turkish LGBTQ migrants' spatial experiences in QPoC places. The case of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants complicates El-Tayeb's practical dilemma in two ways: firstly, the Turkish new wave migrants arrive in Berlin, a city where Turkish presence is established with years of labor migration from 1960s and other waves of immigration, and find themselves in a discursive map where the means of belonging to either their ethnic community or to the host-society is shaped with elements, such as socio-economic background, access to education, language privileges or limitations. Moreover, this dynamic relationship is shaped with what participants call as passing and other spatial interactions that destabilize in-group and out-group practices among QPoC and non-QPoC groups. Secondly, new wave Turkish migrants, as new comers in Berlin, make sense of racial experiences through their experiences in Turkey, which does not translate into the binary understanding of whiteness and non-whiteness in QPoC's context. Therefore, new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' experience offers a critical reading of El-Tayeb's work by complicating the QPoC experience and exploring the racial and in-group dynamics of QPoC communities in Berlin. It should be noted that both El-Tayeb and Haritaworn focus on second- and third-generation Europeans with migration background in their work. However, they cover the topics of new migrants through their material on media representation of migrants and QPoC activism in Europe. This thesis takes the current literature on queers of color communities as a starting point and ventures in analyzing the way they are experienced by new comers in Berlin.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative data that this thesis utilizes was collected from a period between November 2018 – April 2019 by focusing on the experiences of new-comer Turkish LGBTQ migrants in Berlin, which are referred under this thesis as new wave migrants. The current literature on the new wave migrants does not provide a consensus on the definite reasons for migration but shows this rising-number of migrants as part of the circular migration flow between Turkey and Germany and defines circular migration as temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas, typically for the purpose of employment (Aydın, 2016; Steinmann, 2018). In a recent article, Gülay Türkmen (2019) refers the new wave as white-collar professionals who no longer see a future for themselves in Turkey, students, leftist oppositional figures, Kurdish political actors, persecuted academics, and exiled intellectuals, among others” (p.5).

Following Türkmen’s notes on the diversity among the new wave Turkish migrants in Germany, it is important to underline that the new wave Turkish migrants in this research falls under a narrower category. In order to elaborate on my focus, the participants hold citizenship bound with Turkey (referred in this work as “Turkish people”) and define themselves within the LGBTQIA+ umbrella. Furthermore, most of the participants share a connection with LGBTQ activism and find the civil participation and community-building as essential parts of their everyday life. The qualitative research of this thesis was actualized following Boğaziçi University’s Ethics Committee approval, which was granted in January 2019.

As a preliminary step, I conducted pilot interviews to identify issues and

barriers related to potential participants, to modify my interview questions, and finally to ensure the bias management on my research topic (Kim, 2011; Sampson, 2004). As a small sample, I conducted four pilot interviews with participants who are under the focus of this thesis project. Hence, I designed the sampling strategy of my in-depth interviews following the findings of the pilot ones. As the main themes of my pilot interviews also proved, the reason that I focus on the experience of the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants is twofold: firstly the LGBTQ identity shows a significant role in allowing new wave Turkish migrants to explore outside of their ethnic communities which evolves into their proximity encounters with QPoC-defined places; and secondly the ethnographic specificity of ethnic Turk participant among the new wave migrants provides a unique case to analyze the shift in racial and ethnic discourses from Turkey to Berlin. The question of race and ethnicity proves to be essential within the QPoC communities and coalitional practices in Berlin. Since the ethnic Turk migrants previously positioned as a member of the ethnic-majority in Turkey and preserve their own perception of whiteness (Ergin, 2008; Yorokoglu, 2017), their experiences of racialization in Germany allows this study to follow the shift from ethnic majoritarian position to ethnic minority position. This shift further illuminates the varying ethnic and racial discourses on multiple whiteness(es) that are available in different geographies.

Following the findings of my pilot interviews and preliminary analysis, I realized the QPoC and new wave Turkish migrants relationship focuses on three centers that are most relevant to the relationship between QPoC communities and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants: (1) mobility: defining the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrant's access to QPoC places and their experience in other LGBTQ places; (2) identity: focusing on the understanding of racial and ethnic oppressions and histories in relation to QPoC politics; and (3) alliance, which defines the political

responsiveness and the ideal for unity that the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants nurture towards QPoC communities in Berlin.

As a secondary methodological consequence of my pilot interviews, I expanded my methodology with McCall's (2005) "anticategorical complexity", a method based on the deconstruction of analytical categories. McCall introduces this method in relation to the writings of feminist poststructuralist and feminist of color in women's studies. According to the McCall "...both groups were on the socially constructed nature of gender and other categories and a wide range of different experiences, identities, and social locations that fail to fit neatly into any single master category" (p.1777). The reasons that I utilize this method of analysis are twofold: firstly, the pilot interviews showed a great deconstructive approach regarding the participants' ethnic and racial identity, their position as new wave migrants in Berlin, as well as their conception on whiteness in Turkey's context. This categorical complexity of the participants as new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants requires a tool of analysis that attains intelligibility, which I provided with McCall's methodology. Secondly, working on QPoC communities and observing the contested description of QPoC position among new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants led me to utilize a new way to express the inter-group complexities of QPoC communities in Berlin. Therefore, the purpose of this method is to provide a ground for unstable and heterogeneous social realities. As feminist poststructuralist intervened with the definition of women as a master category, this work intervenes with the use of QPoC as a master category and shows inter-group complexities that supersedes the group structure.

One of the primary methodological consequences of the use of anticategorical complexity is the designing of interview questions. I render suspect the ethnic and racial categories and allowed participants to reflect, refuse, re-define the terminology

that is available to their position in Berlin. The dynamic relationship between the positions of *Türk*, *Türkiyeli*, QPoC have proved that the participants of this work are anything but fixed to defined categories. Abstaining from fixed analytical categories allowed this research to render the boundary-making and boundary-defining processes within the QPoC communities in Berlin.

As a secondary method, I expanded my research with participant observation at QPoC events and community meetings in Berlin. Participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities (Kawulich, 2005). Russel Bernard's (1994) notion of participant observation describes an engagement which requires process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community. The most important element of conducting a successful participant observation is to ensure that members of the community act naturally as the observer stands in the space. My experience with participant observation helped me to provide context for developing interview guides and to engage with groups other than new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants in QPoC places. As I noted earlier in the introduction, my access to QPoC places as a Turkish gay man became an advantage as I blended in as a QPoC in all research participant observations.

Finally, I implement qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) to reflect on mainly three materials: the interactive media materials from QPoC websites, news media articles on new wave Turkish migrants and QPoC in Berlin, and, finally, governmental reports on immigration. By using these materials, I establish a chronology of migration waves from Turkey to Germany and offer an examination of communicative materials to expand on the details of how new wave Turkish migrants are represented in the media and what are the characteristics of QPoC communities.

Since the new wave Turkish immigration is a new topic in Germany, I was able to list all articles published in English. In the end, I chose Luise Sammann's 2019 interview series *Educated, Committed- and Homeless*, published by Deutschlandfunk Kultur, since it is the most current interview series written on the topic of new wave Turkish migrants in Germany. The second news article is *Süddeutsche Zeitung's Turkey's Exiled Intellectuals Find Haven in Berlin*, published in 2017. By using these two main news articles, I access to interviews and some of media stereotypes of new wave Turkish migrants. As a secondary source, I collected the interactive media materials from Kuir Lubun Berlin's Facebook page where they define their mission to understand the group's founding principles. Finally, I also analyze a visual from Jane P. Bucket titled "We nourish each other with recipes of resilience" (2018), an artwork that focuses on QPoC community and resistance in Berlin.

## 2.1 Participants

I start my ethnography from accessible sites, such as open-call QPoC events and community groups. At the beginning of this research, *Kuir Lubun Berlin*, a new support group for Turkish-speaking LGBTQ people in Berlin served as a great platform to build network to reach participants for this research. I contacted my first participants through this network and developed the following connections with snowballing. The sampling strategy of this thesis does not claim any type of representative capacity of new wave Turkish migrants in Berlin. As I mentioned earlier, new wave immigration itself carries a distinct characteristic, involving different social groups with various motivations and backgrounds. However, the participant of this work offers an insight on new wave LGBTQ Turkish migrants. I followed a purposive strategy to cover voices from various sexual orientations and gender identities among new wave LGBTQ Turkish migrants. Therefore, one of my

purposive strategies has been the variegated representation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer identified trans/cisgender woman and man people in my sample. As a second point, I realized the analytical value of focusing on people with ethnic Turk background. Following McCall's anticategorical complexity, my aim is to show the boundaries of identity and belonging in relation to this shared past. Therefore, I sampled research participants based on ethnic-national background(s) and/or preferred (if any) ethnic-national identities.

Throughout this research, I conducted twelve interviews. Twelve is not a representative number but rather the number of minimum participants that allowed me to achieve a variegated group of participants. Table 1 offers an overview of the participants with notes on reflexive screens (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) that shows key characteristics complementing the findings and analysis of this work. I use the following reflexive screens: age, gender identity, sexual orientation, years abroad from Turkey, last academic degree acquired, ethnic-national background(s) and/or preferred (if any) ethnic-national identities. Age, last academic degree acquired, and the years abroad from Turkey serve an important role in explaining what most of research participants share in common, and what connects them to the new wave Turkish immigration phenomenon. As a final reflexive screen, gender identity and sexual orientation plays a role in variegating the analysis of LGBTQ experiences within the new wave Turkish migrants. All the interviews are recorded and transcribed following the meetings.

Table 1. Overview of the Participant Data<sup>4</sup>

Name	Age	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Years Abroad from Turkey	Last degree acquired	Ethnic-national background/ declared ethnic-national identity <sup>5</sup>
Selin	31	Woman	Lesbian	5	MA	ND/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Nermin	30	Woman	Lesbian	3	MA (currently pursuing PhD)	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Ozge	30	Woman	Lesbian	3	BA	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Ahmet	31	Man	Queer	5	MA	ND/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Ugur	28	Man	Gay	4	BA (currently pursuing MA)	Kurdish/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Emre	28	Man	Gay	4	MA	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Ulas	26	Trans Man	Queer	4	MA	Turk
Serkan	26	Man	Gay	5	BA	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Tuba	24	Woman	Lesbian	2	MA (currently pursuing PhD)	Turk
Yucel	34	Man	Gay	6	PhD	Turk
Derin	30	Woman	ND	4	MA (currently pursuing PhD)	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>
Asli	26	ND	Queer	4	BA	Turk/ <i>Türkiyeli</i>

The participants are between 24 and 33 years old, mostly born between 1989 and 1995, which for some sources represent the generation called *millennials* (Allison, 2013; Carter, 2007). Four of the participants identified as gay men, three as lesbian

<sup>4</sup> Table 1 and other ethnographic materials use pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants. The pseudonyms have been discussed with the participants as to assure their protection, anonymity and security in the thesis.

<sup>5</sup> The letters (ND) indicate not-declared, which means the participant preferred not to declare an answer.

women, one as a queer woman, one as a trans queer man, one as a bisexual man, one as only woman and one as only queer. As for the gender identity, the dominant number of research participants are cis-gender people, meaning that they identify with the sex they are assigned at birth.

Considering their educational background, the participants fall under the definition of “talented migrants”, a term that is coined with highly qualified workers (those with master and doctoral degrees), university students and foreign entrepreneurs (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). Among the attractiveness ranking of OECD countries, Turkey is listed as the last one among thirty-five countries, whereas the same ranking shows Germany in the seventh rank as a highly attractive country for talented migrants.

## 2.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

In order to ensure participant’s comfort, I held the interviews in English or Turkish, or, most of the time, in a mixture of the two. I also followed participants' preference in choosing the interview place and arranged the interview times according to their schedules. As the topic at hand requires participants to reflect on their lived experiences, as well as their sense of advocacy and activism, I carefully handled the main themes of this research with the utmost engagement with lived experiences. In order to avoid leading the participants and interfering with their opinions, I only explained the main concepts that are brought up in the interviews briefly without engaging with their political implications. Since the focus of this thesis concerns the individual lived experiences of the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, I chose semi-structures in-depth interview strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Seidman, 2006) to capture the deep meaning of the participants’ experience in Berlin. As the experience of immigration differs immensely, the main purpose of using the in-depth

method is to allow participants to reconstruct their experience with the topic under survey (Seidman, 2006). Due to political sensitive components of this work, especially on the topics of racial and ethnic identities, I chose to arrange one meeting to establish trust and understanding, and a second meeting to delve into the meaning whiteness, class and PoC as they reflect to participant's experiences.

Pilot interviews help me to identify the dominant topics in participants' narratives, which helps create the building blocks of my interview questions: the story of their immigration, their life in Berlin, their relationship with Turkish community in Berlin, their relationship with LGBTQ places and QPoC communities in Berlin, and their relationship with other migrant and ethnic and racial minority groups in Berlin. Following these topics, I design the structure of the in-depth interviews as follows: the first part of the interview focuses on the life story of the participant and the story of his/her/their immigration to Germany. This part aims to provide the framework of the second part and gives general information on who the participant is, what type of background and social setting he/she/they is coming from and what factors have motivated his/her/their immigration. The second part focuses on the present lives of the participants where they are asked to reflect on their experience in LGBTQ places in Berlin, their knowledge and familiarity with the term QPoC, QPoC communities, QPOC identity, and overall QPoC politics. The interviews last on average one-hour and participants are not offered any incentives.

As a secondary method, I implement participant observation over a period of four months at one regular QPoC community events and two single QPoC-oriented panels. I picked the events considering their popularity among new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and their impact and outreach for overall QPoC community in Berlin. The first participant observation field is the meeting series, queer men of color (QMoC), organized by GladT e.V. (German: Gays and Lesbians auf der Türkei,

Eng. Gays and Lesbians from Turkey). GladT e.V. is a support group formed by second- and third- generation people of Turkish descent, and now serves as a platform to work with new migrants, namely people of color groups. QMoC started as a regular meeting group for Black and PoC queer men. By queer, the MoC group refers to an umbrella term covering LGBTQ and other gender identities and sexual orientation. The QMoC gatherings prove to be a diverse platform where I easily engage in open dialogues.

Apart from the regular QMoC meetings, the first QPoC-oriented event that I attended is the panel event “At the Intersections: Being Queer & of Color: Art, Spirituality, Love & Politics”, hosted by Berlin’s Center for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) on August 9, 2018, and the second is the Berlin CuTie BIPoC (queer trans\* inter\* black, indigenous and people of color) Festival. The CIJ is a well-known non-profit organization based in Berlin with the mission to make anti-discrimination and equality policy more inclusive and effective in Europe. The second event that I attended is 2018 CuTie BIPoC (queer, trans, inter, black, indigenous and people of color) Festival is an annual three-day event which attracts QPoC in Berlin. My main sampling strategy in choosing these two events is their popularity among new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, which I found out during my pilot interviews. Due to their importance in participant’s conception of QPoC encounters, I also attended the events to observe and understand the dynamics at the events.

## CHAPTER 3

### EXPLORING THE NEW WAVE IMMIGRATION

“Germany is no immigration country”—this sentence was repeated like a mantra by members of several German governments until the end of the 1990s (Bodemann & Yurdakul, 2006, p. 3). The conversation on Turkish migrants in Germany is definitely not a new one and the large-scale migration flow from Turkey to Germany and the high numbers of residents in Berlin with a Turkish background<sup>6</sup> resulted in a strong academic interest on Turkish diasporas’ and migrants’ experience in Germany, especially on the topics of integration of Turkish (or with a Turkish background) people to the society in Germany (Faas, 2007; Paçacı Elitok & Straubhaar, 2012). This chapter provides an overview of the history of Turkish immigration waves in Germany in the recent decades, and analyzes the content of statistics, news articles, interactive media materials to understand the characteristics of the new wave Turkish immigration and the factors that played a role in their immigration.

#### 3.1 Germany and Turkey: overview of the history of immigration

An exploration of Turkish migrant’s history in the Federal Republic of Germany – and Berlin in particular, proves the strong relationship between the two countries. Turkish people represent the largest minority in Germany with over two million people (Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2016). As for Berlin, Turkish community appears as the second largest ethnic group in the city with the total of 176,730 as of December 31, 2016 (2016, p. 18), 4.8% of the total 3,670,662 registered residents (2016, p. 6; Lehman, 2017). As an outcome of the strong presence of Turkish

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<sup>6</sup> *Turkish background* and any term that uses *with migration background* refers specifically to ‘all persons who have immigrated into the territory of today’s Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, and all persons born in Germany who have at least one parent who immigrated into the country or was born a foreigner in Germany (DeStatis 2012).

community in Berlin, certain neighborhoods, such as Kreuzberg the “Little Istanbul” and Neukölln have been particularly popular for Turkish community. Due to the lack of traceable studies on Turkish community and the statistics of LGBTQ migrants, I do not have a number of LGBTQ Turkish migrants in comparison to the overall number of Turkish people in Berlin. However, a recent 2016 report shows that Berlin has 3,711,933 inhabitants, out of which an estimated 10% are openly LGBTQ (Dalia Research, 2016).

Migration flows between Germany and Turkey began in the 1960s with the signing of a formal labor recruitment agreement in 1961.<sup>7</sup> The background of this agreement gives away the motivation that was behind this historic turn. In a nutshell, the economic boom of the post-war era, the Western German “economic miracle,” resulted in an increased need for labor. As an addition to this rising need in labor, the separation between West Berlin and the eastern part with the Berlin Wall stopped a considerable influx of labor in 1961 (Heidemeyer, 1994). As a reaction to the labor shortage, the Federal Republic of Germany started recruiting foreign guest workers (*gastarbeiter* in German) who would work during the period of their contracts and eventually leave Germany after the labor shortage was solved. The 1961 agreements attracted a large-scale of Turkish labor migrants who moved to West Germany. This initial movement in 1960s marked as the first flow of migration.

According to Yaşar Aydın’s 2016 report published under Migration Policy Institute, the German-Turkish migration literature sets six waves starting from the 60s to early 2000s. These waves are: (1) 1961 to 1973 labor recruitment; (2) 1973 to the 1980s family reunification and irregular migration; (3) 1980s political asylum seekers and refugees; (4) 1983 to 1985 return migration; (5) 1990s second refugee wave as continuation of the 1980s political refugees; and finally (6) the 2000s

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<sup>7</sup> Other agreements were also signed with Italy, Spain, and Greece in 1955, and later with Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968) (see Aydın 2016).

circular migration (Aydın, 2016). According to Aydın (2016), the circular migration with started around 2000s includes a static number of highly educated professionals who move to Germany for academic or professional reasons. Since Aydın's report was published in 2016 and only includes the immigration data from 2015 statistics, his categorization of post-2000 period as circular migration does not contradict with the new wave migration phenomenon.

There are a number of important breaking points that shifted the representation of Turkish migrants and offered varying images of Turkish identity in Germany. The 1980s was one of the first waves that attracted a high number of migrants with different migration motivation, namely politics. The political turmoil in Turkey during that time (1971 military memorandum and following events) forced many people and political actors and other highly qualified and politically active persons to migrate to Germany (Aydın, 2016). The 1980s immigration flow opened a critical point that expanded Turkey – Germany immigration debates from the framework of economic aspirations to political and social safety. The migrants of this wave had a big impact in shifting Turkish community's perceived homogeneity in the German social paradigm and influenced today's representation of "Turks who are not like other Turks", meaning the separation of "good Turk" who is more open to European ideals of everyday life and against the oppressive politics of Turkey. On the other hand, the "bad Turk" appeared to represent migrants who are supportive of Turkish politics and does not wish to integrate to German society.

Another important turn was 1990s second refugee wave following the armed conflict between the Kurdish rebel organization Kurdistan Workers' Party (KWP) and the Turkish government. This era resulted in a clearly visible Kurdish diaspora in Germany, both in social and political terms. With the peak of Kurdish political activity and Kurdish organizations, the tension between Kurds and Turks caused a

strong fragmentation of Turkish diaspora. This shift has impacted the political responsiveness toward certain issues, such as the political sensitivity towards representing all migrants from Turkey as “Turk.” Following these rightful concerns regarding ethnic grouping, many ethnic communities and civil society organizations have moved away from using direct ethnic and racial indicators that are exclusionary to Kurdish migrants.

In the light of the immigration flows covered above, it is clear that the literature on Turkish community has grown in heterogeneity in the past 50 years, especially on the topic of ethnic and racial diversity (Bodemann & Yurdakul, 2006). Furthermore, many of the scholarly works on the Turkish community in Germany have focused on the question of integration of Turkish people into German society (Euwals, Dagevos, Gijsberts, & Roodenburg, 2007). However, the literature on Turkish diaspora and migration has failed to provide an analysis that reflects the experience of Turkish LGBTQ migrants. Among the limited number of academic works on Turkish LGBTQ, the main focus stayed as Turkish LGBTQ migrants’ identity position, as negotiating a place as non-Germans in the German national space or *Leitkultur*, a leading or hegemonic culture (see Petzen 2004). As these works focused on the “obstacles” of integration (Verkuyten 2016, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009), it is worth noting that the “obstacles” for integration have usually been presented as Turkish people’s closely-knitted community life (mostly in neighborhoods like Kreuzberg) where they speak Turkish and have access to different information sources that keep them connected to Turkey.

In understanding the overriding themes that define the representation of Turkish people in Germany, I start with looking at the 1961 to 1973 labor recruitment, the first initial encounter between Turkish labors and Germany. The *guest-worker* approach resulted in a lack of status for long-term residents and poor

planning for long-term integration projects. Petzen (2004) defines the effects of this approach and explores the possible outcomes it has had on people with Turkish background.

For *Türkiyelis*, especially the first generation, absence of the permanent resident status caused difficulties in investing in Germany wholeheartedly. Thus, their sense of ambiguity was sharpened due to a lack of a long-term protected legal status in Germany. Even today, with the automatic citizenship granted as a right for anyone born here, the official discourse often refers to citizens of Turkish descent as co-citizens, or *Mitbürger* (Aydın, 2016, p. 12). The automatic citizenship for anyone born here was passed with transitional arrangements in the 1999 reforms (effective 1 January 2000) for children who were born in Germany in 1990 or later (Aydın, 2016)<sup>8</sup>. Considering that the generation born in 90s are in their early adulthood, the memory of the citizenship process and its precarity can be traced very visibly among Turkish activist groups and community in Germany.

### 3.2 New wave Turkish immigration: statistics and representation

Building on top of the current literature, I start my research on the new wave of Turkish immigration with the statistics from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) 2017 report to collect statistical data regarding the recent immigration flows.

According to the TSI, 253.640 people emigrated from Turkey in 2017, which is 42% higher compared to the previous year. The report shows that this migration group's age is mostly between 25-29 and that 29.9% is from Istanbul (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2017). In parallel to this data, a study from 2016 also mentions a rising flow of Turkish migrants entering Germany who are higher skilled and better educated

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<sup>8</sup> On January 1, 2000, the new Nationality Law entered legal force which introduced elements of the *ius soli* for foreign children born in Germany for the first time. The law also brought new regulations for adult foreigners, such as the reduction of the necessary time of sojourn and the introduction of a language test in the naturalization proceeding (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2005).

compared to earlier flows (Aydın, 2016). However, Aydın's report does not name the new wave immigration flow but presents it within the 2000s circular immigration flow between Turkey and Germany.

Even though there is limited scholarly work on the new wave immigration phenomenon, it is clear that this topic has found sufficient ground to take part in online platforms, interviews, and several news reports. Starting from the online platforms, the new wave Turkish immigration phenomenon has found a big audience on Facebook. The first online platform is called *New wave in Berlin*, which was founded on June 22, 2016 and has reached 2,626 members by 2019.<sup>9</sup> The second online platform is *Ötekilerin Berlin Dalgası* (Eng. “Others’ Berlin wave”), founded in 2018 with 912 members by 2019. The online platforms offer practical solutions to questions concerning residency, doctors, markets, barbers and many other topics of everyday life. The New wave in Berlin group defines its mission as follows: “This group was established for the Turkish-speaking community who came to Berlin recently with a new wave of immigration. We used to know each other by sight at least in Kreuzberg; now we need a bigger network to follow this flow of new generation migrants from Turkey” (“New Wave in Berlin,” n.d.). The mark of the “Turkish-speaking” resonates with the similar discourse of *Türkiyelilik* which promotes the acknowledgement of ethnic and racial heterogeneity of Turkish people. *Ötekilerin Berlin Dalgası* (Eng. Others Berlin Wave) does not provide a detailed description of their objectives and only references that it promotes “...pluralism, and anti-majoritarian *Türkiyeliler* in Berlin” (“Ötekilerin Berlin Dalgası” n.d.).

From the information I gather from the two aforementioned online platforms, it is clear that the online self-representation of the new wave migrants is careful to represent ethnic and racial heterogeneity of people from Turkey. This attention is

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from the group's page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1744464679140962/about/>

usually shown with the usage of the terms, such as *Türkiyeliler* or Turkish-speaking people to refer to the community, instead of using *Türk* or even Turkish.

Following the direct references to neighborhoods in social network platforms, it is apparent that neighborhoods like Kreuzberg, which hosted the guest workers, a closely knitted community from Turkey since the 1960s, still holds importance in defining the spatial relationship of the new wave Turkish migrants. This may show the particularity of Berlin, especially in hosting new migrants who are not yet fluent in German and are in need of community and support.

Another important source to analyze the new wave Turkish migrants is given their media representation and their online interviews. Luise Sammann's 2019 interview series *Educated, Committed – and Homeless*, published in English in 2019 by Deutschlandfunk Kultur and Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung's Turkey's Exiled Intellectuals Find Haven in Berlin*, published in 2017 provide a general idea about the discussions surrounding the new wave migrants. As it is covered by Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the new wave migrants are artists, academics and other people who came to Germany in refuge from Turkey's ruling party, JDP (Justice and Development Party)'s politics (Lehman 2017). On the other hand, Lehman's article underlines an image that Germany is offering a refuge to people who have suffered from Turkey's politics. In Luise Sammann's 2019 interview series, published in English, she historicizes the new wave Turkish immigration within the waves of Turkish immigration in Germany.

No one knows exactly how many Turks like Zümrüt Kaplan have come to Germany for political reasons in recent years. One thing is for sure: there are many. Half a century after their parents and grandparents left their country in search of work and wages to work for Siemens, Mercedes and Co. for a better life, another group set off. But people like Zümrüt do not flee from poverty in Anatolia. They flee from a system in that they are no longer welcome anyway (p.5).

A comparison of earlier Turkish immigration waves and new wave Turkish migrants

is a common theme presented in many of the online interviews and media representation. Sammann's comparison takes another step and suggests a symbolic kinship, representing older waves of Turkish migrants as 'grandparents' of the new wave Turkish migrants. Sammann's symbolic parental bond implies that there is an inevitable connection between the generations of Turkish migrants and encourages the reader to understand the new wave in relation to the earlier immigration waves. The second important element of this paragraph is the unchanging status of Germany, as the giving-hand for Turkish people who are running away from political or financial crisis in Turkey. The discourse on Germany's giving-hand is emphasized repeatedly as the first generation was "running away from the poverty in Anatolia" and the new wave is fleeing from "the oppressive political system". The oppressive political system stands more as an ambiguous signifier to define set of political events in Turkey.

Sammann's 2019 interview series states one of the main triggering factors of the new wave immigration is Turkey's political climate in 2016 – the year of the failed coup attempt in Turkey: "The new wave migrants are the highly qualified Turks who have fled their homeland since 2016 because of the political climate." (p.4) In the 2016 military coup attempt, 70.000 people were taken in a wave of arrests under a two-year state of emergency, which was declared in July 2016 (Holly, 2018). The two-year state of emergency period caused political and social instability, as well as big financial loss with an estimate of 125.000 civil servants losing their jobs. It is important to understand the 2016 in perspective of the series of events in 2010s, which caused major limitations on the lives of LGBTQ with bans on LGBTQ events in Turkey. These events include the ban on Istanbul Pride Walk in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, prohibition of Istanbul TransPride Walk and Izmir Pride March, and finally the 2017 Ankara Governorship's ban on any type of LGBTQ events and

gatherings in Ankara. In the light of these events which affected many LGBTQ lives in Turkey, the motivation that the participant of this work differs drastically from the earlier waves of Turkish migrants, yet they find themselves in an oversimplified categorization as the grandchildren of the earlier Turkish immigration waves.

There are several examples focusing on the new wave Turkish migrants and their relationship with the earlier waves. Many of these representations perpetuates opposing images of earlier immigration waves as ‘bad Turks’ and new immigration wave as ‘good Turks’. The news report in a Germany daily lifestyle magazine offers their insight on the new wave Turkish migrants:

The new wave Turkish migrants are easy to overlook, because new arrivals from Turkey can blend (for some people) easily into the greater background of the ‘second capital’. But they are generally more metropolitan in origin than the working folk who came as *guest-workers* (most new arrivals come from Istanbul rather than Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region). We are talking about academics made redundant during the purge of Turkey’s universities, artists who are resisting... a mix of professionals working in music, film, IT, business, what have you, who’d rather live in exile. These young people—fed up with Turkey’s political situation and the authoritarianism of Erdoğan—see little future for themselves in their home country (Pearson, p.3).

As it is mentioned above, the new wave is usually celebrated for its capability to blending-in in Europe and marketed with their perk for being easily overlooked. Pearson’s comment on new wave Turkish migrant’s ability to blend-in hints at the new wave Turkish migrants’ ethnic ambiguity as they stay as non-European but also show propensity to blend-in through the eyes of Pearson. There is an underlined assumption that new wave Turkish migrants’ ability of blending-in is connected with their metropolitan background, their high skilled and educated profiles, and their political standing. However, the notion of blending-in stands as a critical point in later chapters when deciding what it means in the way Turkish LGBTQ migrants situate their racialized experiences in Berlin.

Pearson’s and Sammann’s articles show that Turkish new wave migrants are

studied in comparison to the previous immigration waves, who are depicted as less educated and less capable of performing European metropolitanism. Overall, both articles underline that new wave Turkish migrants are a group of highly-skilled metropolitans who are fed up with JDP's oppressive politics. One key aspect that connects these two articles is the two-sided representation of the new wave Turkish migrants: both as a continuity of the earlier waves with almost a symbolic bond of kinship, and as a very different, new, better version of the earlier migration waves. Creating a symbolic kinship between different waves of Turkish immigration and treating new wave migrants as the grandchildren of the earlier ones neglects the complex set of social realities puts German-Turkish population in less favorable position in the German public's eye. The particular emphasis on the relationship between different waves of Turkish migration is highlighted with differences between older generations of Turkish migrants and the new ones:

The Turks, who were born and raised in Germany, and the Turks, who are newly from Turkey, are very different: our way of life, our political opinion, our taste. Besides, they already have their families and friends here who can ask them for advice. But we usually come all alone, the more we have to stick together...yes, I am really lucky. Because the truth is: I do not miss my country, but my people there (Sammann 2019, p.1).

From the information we gather here, the repeated assurance on the new wave Turkish migrants difference from the older waves, especially in "way of life, political opinion, and taste" deserves attention. Besides the representation of the common characteristics, the attempt in differentiating the new wave from the old ones might be to create opposing images to make the new wave immigration more desirable to the German public.<sup>10</sup> Following this opposing representation, the symbolic kinship

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<sup>10</sup> This opposing representation and the emphasis on the political opinion reflects German medias' struggle in understanding the German-Turkish population's support of JDP with nearly two-thirds of votes cast by the Turkish community in Germany for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Winter 2018). While struggling with such questions, assuring the German public that the new wave Turkish migrants are not supportive of the Turkish government answers an urging need to find an answer to Turkish migrants' politics in Germany.

between the old and the new waves expands on differentiating the “good Turk” from “bad Turk”: The former one as more adaptable with progressive political views as the model migrants, and the latter one is less adaptable to the greater background of Berlin.

Before proceeding to the experience of the research participants, it will be necessary to discuss the current research on new migrants in Europe. The experience of the highly educated new migrants’ interaction in Europe has been studied by many scholars (Buijs, Demant, & Hamdy, 2006, Entzinger & Dourleijn, 2008, Verkuyten 2016). The relationship between the host society and highly educated new migrant groups shows a paradoxical situation, especially since the highly-educated migrants turn psychologically away from the host society instead of becoming more oriented toward it.<sup>11</sup> The experience of discrimination and low public acceptance causes a process of disengagement from the host society and a stronger identification with migrants’ ethnic group (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Since most of research participants hold degrees equivalent to masters or higher (see Table 1 in Chapter 2), their registration of the high rate of discrimination can work as an indicator for their need for support among ethnic communities. All of research participants confirmed that they have faced discrimination during their stay in Germany and described their experience as racism and anti-Turk discriminatory behaviors.

As I mentioned earlier in the Introduction Chapter, The German SCIP-project’s recent research on the new wave of highly educated Turkish migrants prove that there is a higher percentage of perceived ethnic discrimination compared to earlier immigration waves (Verkuyten, 2016). According to this study, the ethnic

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<sup>11</sup> This work refuses to refer to “host society” as a singular, homogenous entity, and acknowledges people of color communities as a significant part of the “host society”. It also refuses to acknowledge a monolithic reading of the integration as a state apparatus to generate national solidarity and a unified society.

discrimination is attributed to the factors that new migrants are confronted with discrimination in societal domains, such as while searching for a job, trying to register in schools or when applying for a flat, which creates socioeconomic barriers that are difficult to overcome. It is important to note that the German-SCIP project covers only racialized experiences and does not offer information on LGBTQ migrants' experiences with homophobia or other discriminatory behaviors caused by gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Another research on the same topic by Jan Steinmann (2018) concludes the following: "I have found that discrimination is a striking concern among higher educated immigrants in general. However, this is especially the case for highly educated immigrants from ethnic groups that are confronted with bright boundaries (e.g. Turks)" (p. 12). The difference between bright boundaries, which involve no ambiguity about community membership, and blurred ones, which do, is hypothesized to be associated with the prospects and processes of assimilation and exclusion (Alba, 2005). Therefore, the issue of bright boundaries in Steinmann's study refers to the ambiguity of membership among new wave Turkish migrants to the host society. On the other hand, blurred ethnic boundaries refer to highly educated migrant's ability to blend-in in the greater background of the host society.

All of the participants confirmed that they are well aware of the classification of new wave and have used the website platforms to navigate every day topics, such as finding health services, events, apartments. However, many of them raised concern regarding the definition of the new wave and find it problematic to differentiate the waves of migrations at the cost of representing the previous one as less adaptable or less metropolitan.

The experiences of research participants show that their sexual orientation and gender identity serve as a common denominator that distance them from

heterosexist ethnic communities. Most of the participants share a similar hesitation when being confronted with Turkish language in the city. Ulas' experience sheds light on the conflict that Turkish LGBTQ migrants anticipate in their encounters with Turkish community: "I live in Kottbussertor, a neighborhood with many Turkish-owned restaurants, I recently realized that I always act cautiously when I'm in a Turkish speaking zone or I always choose not to go to Turkish-owned places when I'm with a partner" (personal communication, 2019). Ulas anticipates homophobic encounters when he is in Turkish-owned places in Kottbussertor. However, this anticipation leaves its place to another type of concern, mostly related to race-based dynamics, when he is being surrounded with "white" Europeans in non-Turkish places. Nermin reflects on the same topic as follows: "Dealing with homophobia within Turkish community became a challenge and voicing my concern to a white European audience has a different political meaning" (personal communication, 2019). Similar to Ulas's experience, Nermin's concerns are concerning two pillars: the first is the homophobia which she anticipates and experiences within Turkish community, and the second is the possible racist or exclusionary comments that she is anticipating from the white European audience. Both Ulas's and Nermin's consciousness of being politically responsible towards Turkish community and not allowing certain damaging stereotypes to be attached with Turkish people also affect their attitude towards white European audience.

As an addition to this multilayered relationality with Turkish audience and white audience, some participants mentioned that having left Turkey in an oppressive political climate affected their everyday lives in Berlin and what they value/expect from a community. Ozge, a freelance artist who moved to Berlin three years ago, states that "coming from a very specific political climate, I feel like we are more appreciative of political correctness and the idea of safe space" (personal

communication, 2019). Similar to Ozge's comments, most of research participants underlined that leaving Turkey in a political tense setting made them more aware of the need of political sensibility and safe space.

New wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants are described as politically responsive and ethnically heterogeneous group who are predominantly coming from Turkey's urban centers with middle- upper-middle class backgrounds. One of the key aspects that defines new wave Turkish migrants is their attributed ability to blend-in in the background of Berlin. However, a recent study (Verkuyten, 2016) shows that new wave Turkish migrants are perceiving higher numbers of ethnic discrimination and being confronted with bright boundaries on their professional life, university and other topics, such as apartment search. In the light of the media representation and Verkuyten's study, there are two opposing images that put new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants either on the invisible side where they are capable of blending-in in the greater background of Berlin, or in the visible side there they are being confronted with bright boundaries. This distinction resonates with Maghbouleh's racial loopholes where new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants' every day on-the-ground of experience of racialization contradicts with their presented and promoted ability to blend-in in the greater background of Berlin.

As an addition to their in-between position towards being confronted with bright boundaries or being invisible, participants' experience both with the white Europeans and Turkish community destabilize the in-group and out-group boundaries by offering yet another marginalization as they distance themselves from heterosexist Turkish community to avoid homophobia and transphobia, and from white Europeans to avoid racism and other racially motivated exclusionary behaviors.

## CHAPTER 4

### QPOC PLACE-MAKING PRACTICES IN BERLIN

Berlin has carried the image of being a safe-haven for many forms of non-normative lifestyles (Petzen, 2004), which have been characterized with the old cabaret culture, leather community and its vibrant LGBTQ scene. This chapter first looks at the history of Berlin's LGBTQ history to explore some of the key moments that shaped Berlin's QPoC politics and communities. The second part expands on this history and analyzes QPoC's place-making practices and spatial intervention in making and sharing places. I use "place-making" as set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies and locations in which they live (Pierce et al., 2011). Therefore, place-making practices includes the formation of the QPoC places in Berlin, such as QPoC panels, community gatherings, and other QPoC-oriented events. The reason that I start with place-making practices in analyzing the QPoC formation is due to the significance of the place-frame in forming QPoC network processes in Berlin. These places serve as platforms of socio-spatial relationships where QPoC community takes form and definition in singular occurrences. Also, following the footsteps of Turkish LGBTQ new wave migrants, QPoC places appear as one of the first contact points between new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and QPoC communities.

One of the recurring strategies of forming QPoC places and communities is through mitigation of elements that threaten the "safety" and comfort of QPoC. This strategy is usually practiced through "safe space" practices. Safe space, or safer space has varied use in different contexts. As a critical investigation of the claim of safety and safe space, Christina B. Hanhardt (2013) defines the phenomenon as an ideal of finding or developing environments in which one might be free of violence,

exploitation of power and disturbance of peace. Hanhardt acknowledges that seeking for safety as an ideal is acceptable; however, she carefully states that:

Ultimately, I argue that the quest for safety that is collective rather than individualized requires an analysis of who or what constitutes a threat and why, and a recognition that those forces maintain their might by being in flux. And among the most transformative visions are those driven less by a fixed goal of safety than by the admittedly abstract concept of freedom. This is all, I might add, to say nothing about the benefits or limits of a stance of nonviolence (p. 9).

Therefore, analyzing the place-making practices that are materialized in the name of safe spaces or safer spaces brings the following questions: who or what constitutes a threat, and why. By posing this model of analysis, Hanhardt's study shows the contested nature of safety by exposing isolationist/protectionist practices that are being implemented under its name.

As an addition to Hanhardt's analytical tool, I also survey the question of how the safe space is actualized in QPoC place making practices and what are some of the racial interactions that new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants face in their interaction with public places in Berlin. In doing so, I utilize the term "racial profiling" which is the term that has been commonly used in describing the instances where police officers use race as an indicator to understand whether someone has committed an illegal offence in the U.S. context. In Eddie Bruce-Jones study, *Race in the Shadow of Law* (2017), racial profiling appears as a tool of exclusion from publicly accessible places based on race. Bruce-Jones uses the term "selectors" to define people who have control over the access of publicly available places, such as doormen at a club. In the claim of racial profiling, Bruce-Jones differentiates indirect discrimination and direct discrimination as follows:

Indirect discrimination is disadvantageous treatment based on a neutral criterion that disparately affects a group covered by discrimination provisions. In contrast, direct discrimination is a situation in which race or ethnicity is offered as the reason for the exclusion (p. 51).

In the cases of race-based exclusion, Bruce-Jones shows the claim of public good

and community-interest in the cases where Black Germans face direct and indirect discrimination in housing market, employment, publicly available places. It is important to note that Bruce-Jones context is the experiences of Black Germans entering and inhabiting certain public and semi-public spaces in Germany.

Considering the systemic racism and unjust distribution of power against racialized people, the use of racial profiling and discrimination should not be used without its social context. Therefore, Reading Hanhardt and Bruce-Jones together, the experience of new wave Turkish LGBTQ is unique in showing the boundaries of safety and safe spaces for QPoC in Berlin as reflected on the topic of racialized experiences of research participants. In analyzing the place-making practices, I focus on online community definitions and safe space policies and expand my findings with excerpts from research participant observations and interviews.

#### 4.1 Notes on Berlin's gay politics and the defining moments of QPoC

There has been a shift in the way non-European, non-white LGBTQ identities are treated in German media outlets. Berlin's most widely distributed LGBTQ city magazine, Siegessäule, shows a great example of this shift in acknowledging the presence of QPoC in Berlin. In a special issue in early 2000s, the magazine covered a title “Turks out!” referencing both the gay discourse of coming out and the tension over the homophobic incidents attached to the stereotypes of Turkish community in Germany. The issue reinstated the Turkish masculinity as rigid and homophobic and in a mocking way that invalidates the cultural differences that defines the experience of Turkish LGBTQ at the time in Berlin. After twenty years of this highly racialized coverage of migrant sexuality and homophobia, the same magazine hosts Alok Vaid – Menon as a cover (shown in Figure 2), a famous spokesperson for anti-racist LGBTQ movements and intersectional trans of color justice movement. The same

issue also devotes a two-page spot for the story of Ipek Ipekcioglu, a German - Turkish lesbian activist and DJ, who is nominated for one of the three Lesbian Visibility Award's by the German Senate and gives a spotlight to the documentary *Mr. Gay Syria* (2015) which focuses on the lives of LGBTQ Syrian refugees in Turkey and their experience with mobility and sexual identity.



Figure 1 Siegessäule cover from August 2018

The question of what happened in between early 2000s and late 2010s is a question of a long struggle for visibility and recognition that has been fought by Berlin's QPoC communities. This section focuses on Berlin as a city of non-normative life styles and focuses on some of the defining moments where QPoC presence was made visible to a public audience.

By the 1920s, Berlin was home to an estimated 85,000 lesbians, a thriving gay-media scene, and around 100 LGBT bars and clubs (Hutton, 2018; McKay, 2004; DW, 2003). As an addition to the vibrant nightlife, Magnus Hirschfeld's revolutionary Institute for Sexual Science openly lobbied for the decriminalization of homosexuality and helped transgender men apply with government agencies to live legally under their new gender. Of course, the LGBTQ scene shifted into a darker era in 1933 following Adolf Hitler's election, the Institute for Sexual Science was looted,

and same-sex dancing was banned. Following these strict rules, an estimated 100,000 LGBTQ individuals were arrested between 1933 to 1945. Some 50,000 gays were branded criminals and degenerates by the Third Reich and forced to wear a pink triangle.

Decades after the atrocities of National Socialism, Berlin had Klaus Wowereit, an openly gay German politician, as the Governing Mayor from October 2001 to December 2014. As an addition to the high number of LGBTQ people and an openly elected Mayor, the city hosts one of Europe's most crowded pride marches: Christopher Street Day (CSD), which has been organized since 1979. In 2018's walk, the CSD was attended by 500,000 people and is recorded as one of the most crowded LGBTQ marches in Germany.<sup>12</sup> A recent 2016 report shows that Berlin has 3,711,933 inhabitants, out of which an estimated 10% are openly LGBTQ, which is a high number compared to the results of Europe with 5.9%, or of Hungary with 1.5% (Dalia Research, 2016). It is important to note that there is no clarity on which populations are being represented in these surveys. Nevertheless, higher statistical numbers of openly LGBTQ people indicates that there are more people who are actively involved LGBTQ agenda and the community.

The history of Berlin's LGBTQ politics may show a great progress within the recent years; however, the representation of safe-haven fails to detail the contentions that have taken place over the recent years. Choose the historic turns that defined the contours of QPoC politics in Berlin, I acknowledge that the history of QPoC is not segregated from the history of other social justice movements, such as black feminist movement and anti-racist social justice movements which have strongly influenced the QPoC discourse in Berlin. First of all, QPoC politics in Berlin is in strong

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<sup>12</sup>CSD was first celebrated on June 30, 1979, as a support to the Stonewall Riots and the big uprising against police assaults in Greenwich Village in 1969 (McKay, 2004).

connection with women of color feminism and especially the Black lesbian and queer women of color presence.<sup>13</sup> Different venues and places showed twenty-seven screenings of the documentary “Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years” in only two years between 2017-2019.<sup>14</sup> As a second important movement, Kanak Attack, a collective that is organized by people with working class, guest-worker background in Germany had a strong impact in shaping the migrant and minority ethnic politics in Berlin, especially in the early 2000s.

In 2010, CSD nominated Judith Butler for the Civil Courage Prize, an annual prize to celebrate the rising figures in LGBTQ movement. The event took an unexpected turn after Butler had declared her acceptance of the prize, but then declined it after arriving in Berlin. Butler refused the award by pointing out CSD’s complicity with racism and anti-Muslim discrimination (Zimmer, Heidingsfelder, Adler 2010). Butler’s speech detailed her conversation with QPoC community groups in Berlin and the critiques they had been raising for many years to CSD:

The problem was not that the event was superficial, but that the CSD is linked with several groups and individuals who engage in a very strong anti-migrant discourse, referring to people from north Africa, Turkey, and various Arab countries as less modern or more primitive. Although we can find homophobia in many places, including those of religious and racial minorities, we would be making a very serious error if we tried to fight homophobia by propagating stereotypical and debasing constructions of other minorities. My view is that the struggle against homophobia must be linked with the struggle against racism, and that subjugated minorities have to find ways of working in coalition. It was brought to my attention that the various groups that struggle against racism and homophobia are not part of the CSD list of affiliates (Butler's CSD speech, 2010).

Butler’s speech granted a historic moment for Berlin’s QPoC to reach a public audience and to reflect on CSD’s biased actions towards migrants, Muslims, and other ethnicized and racialized groups. CSD’s biased actions were shown with its

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<sup>13</sup>See the first queer of color from Germany anthology prepared by Olumide Popoola and Beldan Sezen (1999) *Talking Home: Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder. Frauen of Color in Deutschland*

<sup>14</sup> A documentary about Audre Lorde's years in Berlin in which she catalyzed the first movement of Black Germans to claim their identity as Afro-Germans with pride. As she was inspiring Afro-Germans she was also encouraging the white German feminists to look at their own racism.

attempt in aligning its politics with xenophobic and anti-immigrant groups under the name of fighting homophobia. Instead of accepting the prize, Butler offered the nomination to QPoC community groups and listed GladT e.V., LesMigras, SUSPECT and Transgenial CSD, groups who are representing QPoC in Berlin. The voice of QPoC politics that was raised during the speech was an echo of a deep contention in LGBTQ politics, not only in Berlin but also in the U.S. as well. The aftermath of September 11 has been recorded as rising xenophobia and Islamophobia in the U.S. and in Europe and studied by many scholars, including U.S.-based queer theorist Jaspir Puar's 2007 monograph *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Time*. Jaspir Puar's concept, "homonationalism" served as a strong tool which defines the criminalization, militarization and border enforcement under the name of gay liberation and political and/or governmental bodies efforts to systematically treat racialized minorities and migrants with intolerance and repression. Puar's reading of the intersecting and overlapping identity categories proved a great value for future works, including the works of scholars like Haritaworn and El-Tayeb.

The second turning point for QPoC presence in Berlin can be traced with the formation of the Transgenialer CSD (TCSD) pride walk as a critique of the commercialization and the homonationalist politics of the CSD pride. TCSD was organized from 1998 to 2013 and took place in Kreuzberg. The event was mostly organized by LGBTQ migrants and supported by QPoC organizations, such as GladT e.V. and Turkey's LambdaIstanbul. The 2009 manifesto declared a strong QPoC stance with the following paragraph:

Groups of people are defined as minorities outside normalcy, degraded and played off against each other. At best, they are graciously "tolerated" or "accepted" because "normality" needs exclusion. That does not hide from the racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic violence, the exclusion of non-"beautiful", non-young, non-rich, non-white, disabled, politically uncomfortable people living in this society - and unfortunately within our scenes - everyday life is (TCSD, 2009).

The message of this paragraph indicates a strong binary between what is deemed as minority and majority. The minority, here representing the TCSD's audience who had suffered from racialization and discrimination is presented as being "defined outside normalcy" and "excluded." The exclusion of "non-"beautiful", non-young, non-rich, non-white, disabled" is the way TCSD put how certain subjects are marked as disposable. Besides the distinction made between minority and majority, TCSD claims the minority position by marching for the those who are deemed misfit in the Berlin's LGBTQ majority.

The third turning point for Berlin's QPoC is the The Khalass!!! Manifesto, an anti-gentrification protest letter used in the 2013 TCSD in Berlin. The letter is authored by an anonymous group who identifies as queer, trans, inter, Black, Muslim, Arab, Romani, mixed-race, Mizrahi, refugee, native, Kurdish, Armenian. Considering the Khalass!!! Manifesto as a collective speech act, the defining elements of QPoC's manifestation or the momentary snapshot becomes clear. The collective "we", describes a QPoC community as an agentic group of people who proposes an intersectional justice against homonationalism, gentrification and many forms of vulnerability that are present in their everyday lives (Biti, 2017). In analyzing these historical turning points of QPoC in Berlin, it is clear that the distinction between "us" and "Other" is drawn not only with the difference of being a white European or racialized group, but with the multiple elements that influences the everyday lives of migrant and other vulnerable groups. TCSD describes the misfitting by underlying the exclusion of non-white, non-young, non-rich and disabled form the majority. Taking from Haritaworn's work, falling out of the definition of proper queer subject position is producing subjects who are vulnerable to the tools of queer regeneration.

Taking from these historical turning points and carrying the meaning of

QPoC presence in today's Berlin, I participated in Berlin's Trans Film Festival "TransFormations", which introduced a mission for QPoC politics in Berlin echoing the turning point covered above:

Amid all the whitewashing of queer, trans and inter histories in mainstream media and institutions, we want to celebrate the legacies and visions of Black, Indigenous, PoC, poor and working class, disabled folks and migrants within the make-up of queer, trans\* and inter, pasts, presents and futurities (Transformation, 2018).

The Trans Film Festival statement mentions ethnic and racial categories as Black, Indigenous, and PoC as well as categories of class, socio-legal status and finally the able-status.

#### 4.2 QPoC place-making practices in Berlin

In an exploration of the key factors that shape QPoC place-making practices, Roderick Ferguson's formulates the QPoC critique as: "[an analysis that] interrogates social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class... a heterogenous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer theory" (Ferguson, 2004). Taking from the perspective of QPoC's stance in critique, QPoC's place-making practice addresses racism, sexism, homophobia, trans-misogyny, transphobia and various forms of intersecting oppressive structures and aims to create places for dialogue and empowerment for QPoC. In Haritaworn's words, QPoC's place-making practices offer "alternative methods of place-making that do not rely on territorialization, securitization, displacement and dispossession" (Haritaworn, 2015). In place-making practices, the concept of safe space comes as one of the overriding themes that is utilized to provide supportive and empowering platforms without fear of judgment or discrimination.

QPoC place-making practices in Berlin mostly prioritizes places where QPoC

community is welcome and safeguarded from possible unwanted encounters with microaggression, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. In order to safeguard the safe space policies, they usually involve a degree of racial, ethnic and sexual separation which usually happens through deciding who falls under the category of being a proper QPoC subject or an ally. As the definition of QPoC shows complexity and divergence, new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants mostly negotiate their position by facing community boundaries and place-making policies for or against their participation.

This section reflects on the interview data and the participant observation from the three places that are designed for QPoC audience: queer men of color, referred as QMoC, meetings, the panel “At the Intersections: Being Queer & of Color: Art, Spirituality, Love & Politics”, and finally the 2018 Berlin CuTie BIPoC (Queer, Trans, Inter, Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Festival. The naming of QPoC as a concept differs with the scope of the occasion; however, QMoC, CuTie BIPoC and other event and place names share the same purpose in creating a safe space within the intersections of race, gender and sexuality. Following Hanhardt’s tool of analyzing safe-spaces, the main questions that I posed to QPoC safe spaces are who or what constitutes a threat for QPoC safety, and why.

#### 4.2.1 GladT e.V. "Queer Men of Color" meetings

GladT e.V (German: Gays and Lesbians auf der Türkei, Eng. Gays and Lesbians from Turkey) is a LGBTQ support organization in Berlin formed mostly by second- and third- generation Turkish people with migration background. The organization now serves as a platform to work with new migrants with a focus on the QPoC community in Berlin. Their website offers a clear overview of their mission as follows:

GLADT is a self-organization of blacks and of color lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, inter and queer people in Berlin. We engage at various levels against racism, sexism, trans and homophobia, disability and other forms of discrimination. A particular focus of our work is on multiple discrimination and intersectionality, overlaps and interactions of different forms of discrimination and their experiences (GladT e.V., 2019).

With this statement, GladT e.V. defines its audience, operation, and focus by covering QPoC politics' global role in defying racism, sexism, trans and homophobia and other forms of discrimination.<sup>15</sup> Under the mission to engage with discrimination, the organization offers regular meetings, free psychological counseling for Black and QPoC groups and other support meetings. It is important to remember that GladT e.V. is an organization that is formed to empower and create services for Turkish people; however, the gradual shift of the organization from its focus on Turkish people to QPoC communities proves the historical shift in who constitutes a racial and/or ethnic minority in Berlin. This historicity also forms the organic bond between the second- and third-generation Turkish people with migration background and QPoC communities in Berlin.

QMoC Berlin is organized under the supervision of GladT e.V. and works as a self-organizing group for black queer men and queer men of color. By man, the group refers to anyone who identifies as a man or who moves along the spectrum of manliness: cis, trans and inter men of color. The group lays its purpose as follows: "The main purpose of this group is to provide a supportive space and a meeting point for us to share our experiences, discuss issues, and organize events such as parties, dinners, movie screenings and workshops in topics related to our experiences and needs" (QMoC, 2019). The event text is available in four languages: English, German, French and Arabic. The main goal of the group is to provide a safe space for QMoC to share their experiences and find ways to build networks among QMoC.

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<sup>15</sup> Please see Chapter 4, Section 2 for more information on GladT e.V.

The first meeting was organized on February 1, 2019 at the Möbel-Olfe bar, a frequented queer bar in Kottbusser Tor in Berlin. Two gay-identified men hosted the meeting: Eren, a Turkish doctoral student of German literature living in Germany for the past five years, and Julio, a Brazilian man living in Germany for more than ten years. After arriving at Möbel-Olfe, I saw three other participants, a Mexican-American man, an African-American man, and a new wave Turkish migrant, Cenk.

The meeting started with an introduction round and a conversation about life in Germany. After taking a turn with the question “how did we end up in Berlin?” one of the American participants turned to Cenk and asked whether he was planning to go back to Turkey and added a concerning comment about how troubling things must have been for a gay man in Turkey. It took a second for Cenk to answer the question; later I learned that he was considering avoiding it with a short answer, but he did not. Cenk first told how hard it was for him to be in Germany, and that he had to go through tedious paperwork and application procedure till he finally made it here. After he confirmed that his experience in Turkey had not been easy, he also added that the topic of Turkey being inherently homophobic was usually treated in an oversimplified manner by the mainstream media.

After talking around with people who came from certain travel and residency privileges, Cenk’s answer came from a position of defense, which denotes he did not feel comfortable being asked those questions. After the meeting, I asked Cenk to reflect on this conversation and he added,

This [referring to the moment that he was asked about Turkey] is exactly the reason why I sometime stagnate to be in these spaces because people with American or European passports will never know how hard it is for me to be here or share this space with them. We may have some common concern regarding racism, discrimination and bias but my life is more defined with legal barriers that puts me at risk in Germany (personal communication, 2019).

Cenk’s experiences with QPoC places show that what these places stand for are

valuable to discuss the impacts of racism, discrimination and bias in other QPoC lives in Berlin. However, Cenk feels disgruntled when he is asked regarding Turkey's politics. During our short interview, Cenk's perception of the QPoC meeting foregrounds the importance of coalition that is based on a shared sense of vulnerability, especially on the topics of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other ethnic and racial discrimination. However, Cenk also admits that the idealization of QPoC coalition lacks the skepticism to evaluate how privileges of travel and socio-economic background are being distributed among those queers of colors. Therefore, Cenk finds himself conflicted between the importance of QPoC community for his experience in Berlin as a queer migrant and the difference that he sees among QPoC which hinders the compassion towards understanding each other's experiences.

In the second and third QMoC meeting, the participants show a similar variety between people from the U.S. and other Turkish or German-Turkish participants. Similar to the conversations from the first meeting, this time we were asked to define our expectations from the QMoC gatherings. One of the Black American participant, Tyler stated that he was lacking QPoC intimacy that he could not find in white or mix places and added that he is usually surrounded by a group of white men when he is out at any gay bar in Berlin. The need for QPoC intimacy was repeated a few more times during the round and participants mostly referred to it as a form of bond that involves dating, friendship, and alliance with the people who have experienced immigration, racialization and ethnic/racial discrimination. One of the participants further defined what he expects from QPoC intimacy as "someone who wouldn't ask where I'm from as the first thing when we met." The need to build intimacy among QPoC can be explained by participants' search for support empowerment and recognition in a place where they can be themselves without fear of exclusion and discrimination.

One of the main functions of QPoC places is providing platforms for migrants and other ethnic/racial minority groups to share their stories and learn from each other. Sharing the stories of injustice creates a collective sense of understanding and support which feed the center element of QPoC community. As an example, after the round on the topic of intimacy, Tyler shared an incident he had recently experienced. The incident was about a moment when he was sitting at a café with a friend and the waiter, a white German man, approached and asked whether they would like to have some hot chocolate. As my side of the table was sitting quietly to hear the rest of the story, Tyler sensed the silence and elaborated on how and why being directly asked for hot chocolate is a racialized experience for a Black person. Later on, similar conversations were shared around the table commenting on problematic incidents and concepts concerning dating, everyday life and discrimination in Germany. The importance of re-telling the stories of discrimination and having the platform to hear other QPoC's narrative serves its function as an investment to other QPoC's to become a community that understands and empathize with each other's experiences.

#### 4.2.2 Other QPoC panels and events

In this section, I focus on two QPoC meetings: the panel event “At the Intersections: Being Queer & of Color: Art, Spirituality, Love & Politics”, hosted by Berlin's Center for Intersectional Justice (CIJ), and the 2018 Berlin CuTie BIPoC (Queer Trans\* Inter\* Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Festival. The first event sought to explore how art, spirituality, love, and politics work together in the existence and experiences of Black and queer people of color in arts and literature. Following this focus, one Black American, and two PoC-identified panelists were invited. The event was hosted by CIJ, a non-profit organization aiming to infuse an intersectional

perspective into anti-discrimination and equality policy to make it more inclusive and effective in Berlin. In organizing the event, CIJ aimed to form a safer space for QPoC to reflect on their experience and they kindly asked participants to vacate the first three rows to Black and PoC audience. Selin, a 30-year-old queer woman (see Table 1 in Chapter 1) attended the event with a friend and was kindly asked by the organizers to change her seat due to the PoC politics:

I was with another queer friend from Turkey and we were politely asked to change our seats to leave the front rows to PoC crowd. As we were too slow to answer, another Iranian friend sitting next to us said we were from Turkey, which led to a smile and a soft apology explaining that they have a similar confusion with Syrians and other Turkish people. In the end, there were only three people who knew that we were from Turkey and the rest of the crowd kept staring and expecting an explanation. I know that what I represent in a physical space can be triggering for people, that is why I usually prioritize the people and choose to leave when I am asked. However, my friend got very emotional, as someone who has suffered from institutional discrimination and was raised in a minority ethnic group in Turkey - he found it threatening to be asked to leave a PoC space. Do I want to negotiate my space, or do I want other people to feel safe? (personal communication, 2019)

Selin further explains this interaction through and uses "passing" to explain the interaction. Selin's understanding of passing defines two centers: white and PoC. Reading Selin's experience through Bucholtz's (2011) formulization offers the following findings: Selin's experience with passing indicates that her ethnicity is ambiguous to others. And secondly, the experience of passing is an active construction, as Selin knows that being with another QPoC friend may help her to pass as QPoC as well. Adding to the Bucholtz's discussion on passing, Selin's relationship with both whiteness and brownness shows that not only is she perceived ethnically ambiguous, but she also perceives herself as such. Her identification with whiteness and brownness shifts with her environment and demands other referents to take its final meaning. This interaction leads back to Maghbouleh's case which focuses on how browning becomes a defining practice for in-between people in the U.S.; Selin's experience places/locates/positions her in a different racial loophole

where her in-betweenness opens and closes the doors not only of whiteness, but of brownness as well. The racial liminality of her background marks her experiences as being “too-white” for PoC and “too-PoC” for white places.

Understanding the dynamics of Selin’s experience within the terms of place-making practices, “the selector” (Hanhardt, 2013) of the event asks Selin and her friend to leave their seats with a race-based assumption that they are not PoC. Even though the miscommunication is solved after the first exchange between the selector and Selin, Selin assumes that the collective attention of the place was directed to her as a question on the rightfulness of the space that she occupies. This interaction shows that participants experience with QPoC places shows a similarity with Hanhardt’s safe space critique: QPoC places produce isolationism for those who are seeking safety and community in the very same places. This isolationism occurs closely with Maghbouleh’s concept of “racial loophole” in a way that Selin’s racial ambiguity leaves her racial position out of her control and based solely on the on-the-ground racialized interactions.

Following Hanhardt’s critical enquiry into safe spaces, safe space’s function as the boundary-drawing phenomenon defining the in-group and out-group borders, Selin’s ethnically ambiguous phenotype pushes her outside of the definition of QPoC safety. The moment when Selin and her friend are deemed as misfitting to QPoC, safety exceeds its interaction in the spatial realm and creates a sense of rejection and insecurity. According to Selin, her friend as a person who had suffered from ethnic discrimination in Turkey, appeared more hurt and sensitive after being asked to leave. As Selin further elaborates, her friend saw this moment as an attempt to invalidate his experience as a racialized, marginalized person in Turkey. As a reaction to these experiences, Selin has developed a sensitivity. As a white-passing person, she avoids attending QPoC places if she feels that she won’t be welcome.

The experience of Selin and her friend illustrates a shared concern of how QPoC places are experienced by Turkish people. Most of the participants in this research project share the similar uncertainty on whether they fit in the definition of QPoC, and how their racial liminality is being reflected on this decision. This feeling of not-fitting-in pushes them to perceive QPoC not as a personified position, but as something that has to be negotiated, claimed, and recognized as.

As an addition to the racialized experiences in QPoC places, many of participants also share different spaces where they experienced racialization. As an example, Ugur (see Table 1, Chapter 1) explains an incident of racial profiling:

I used to have a beard, just around the time when Syrians were settling in Berlin. I remember one time when I was sitting with my boyfriend at a cafe at Prenzlaurberg, a random passerby approached us and said to my boyfriend in German, - consider what has happened in Cologne and consider how dangerous these people are for Germany - while she was pointing at me. I was standing speechless till I understood she was talking about me, a person she perceived as a Syrian refugee. I stood up and screamed all the bad things I can think of in German and burst in anger. While other people sitting around us tried to calm me down and telling me things like - welcome to Berlin. I cut my beard after that event (personal communication, 2019).

Following Bruce-Jones classification, Ugur is faced with direct discrimination through racial profiling. Ugur's experience of being profiled as a Syrian refugee and talked against by a passerby stranger shows the practice of racial profiling. Ugur's reaction stood both as an anger for being mistreated as he was read as a Syrian refugee, and frustration for being confronted with racism against Syrian refugees. In this example, Ugur's experience as being racialized as Syrian marks another racial loophole where Ugur's legal status as a migrant from Turkey is contradicted with passerby's intrusion into their private conversation and her direct attempt to racialize Ugur as refugee. Race here, in Maghbouleh's approach, appears as a master status tied to group oppression and domination – in this case the oppression of refugee identities in Germany. Another interesting aspect of Ugur's experience is what follows after the incident. Ugur actively engages with the way he is being perceived

in the greater background of Berlin and attempts to cut his beard to locate his racial ambiguity in a less disputable position.

As a final connection of the spatial interaction between the participants and the QPoC places, Ozge's experience shows how the racial loophole works in her everyday life. Ozge is a PoC identified 30 year-old-lesbian woman (see Table-1) and she describes her experiences with QPoC events as follows: "If I am entering alone or with other white passing people, I always feel anxious because I expect that someone will ask for an explanation. It feels like I have to actively claim that space, otherwise it will be taken away from me" (personal communication, 2019). Ozge's anxiety around the uncertainty of claiming QPoC place as a Turkish white-passing person derives from her past experiences in the PoC defined events. Ozge adds:

I strongly understand and value the reason these spaces were formed, showing up as myself - a white passing Turkish person - feels wrong, I feel very comfortable at queer trans QPoC events because I am unquestionably a queer woman, but I do not feel the same comfort in PoC events (personal communication, 2019).

Ozge's experience shows that the ambiguity surrounding the PoC position is partly lifted with LGBTQ identity, which serves as a transitional element that moves new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants to QPoC places. "Queer" in QPoC transcends its function as an indicator of sexual orientation or gender identity and simultaneously works as a transitional object that moves subjects who are ethnically ambiguous into PoC group.

Following the findings of this chapter, QPoC places are mostly presented as platforms to engage with topics of discrimination, to celebrate differences, and to learn about the legacy of Black, PoC and other minority groups. QPoC safe space practices usually involve racial, ethnic and sexual isolationism, which separates heterosexuals from queers, and PoC from whites, and prioritizes to create places of support and safety by creating alternative places where the experience of

racialization and encounter with white people are minimized. In doing so, QPoC places work with selectors protecting and forming place policies and warns people who fall outside of the definition of QPoC. Following Hanhardt's analytical tool in exploring the safe spaces, and the question of who threatens QPoC safe spaces and why stay in flux, especially as experienced by new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants. In these practices involving QPoC selectors deciding on who is QPoC and who is not, some of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants are being profiled as white and therefore asked to leave.

The experience of passing, and other practices of distinguishing proper subjects for QPoC places impacts participants' self-perception of their racial and ethnic position in relation to the host society and Turkey. LGBTQ migrants' phenotypical characteristics appear as one of the factors that define their experience with passing in QPoC groups. The dynamics of passing appears as an active construction where new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants navigate the limits of PoC and white identities by changing their physical features like in the case of Ugur or finding other PoC friends to disguise their racial ambiguity. Despite this active construction of their image, participants hold limited control over confronting bottom-up racialization. These actions, as Maghbouleh proposes, appear in a way of racial loopholes where new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrant's on-the-ground experience with race contradicts with their own ethnic identities. However, their strong identification with LGBTQ and their appreciation of what QPoC places offer encourage them to claim QPoC places.

## CHAPTER 5

### QPoC AND ETHNIC-RACIAL DISCOURSES

QPoC is a multi-categorical concept which realizes social realities of LGBTQ migrants and ethnic/racial minority groups in Europe and brings two main axes of oppressive structures front: sexuality/gender identification and racial/ethnic identification. As discussed in the earlier chapter, QPoC in Berlin appears in different forms and practices to empower and protect oppressed and discriminated people, whose experiences are marked with racism, homophobia, transphobia, racial and ethnic discrimination. Following the relationship between new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants and QPoC in Berlin, the previous chapter showed that the question of racial position and passing appear as deciding factors in the lives of the participants. Connecting these experiences with the participants' perception of their racial and ethnic position, this chapter explores how new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants engage with ethnic and racial discourses in Berlin. By doing so, the chapter visits El-Tayeb's formulization of two impossible options that LGBTQ urban minorities in Europe face: to identify as an insider of the national community, and, secondly, to accept the outsider status and to identify as migrant and foreigner by claiming racial solidarity that is spatially not available to them, especially for the second- and third- generation migrants whose understanding of "homeland" or ethnic-roots is even more elusive (El-Tayeb, 2011, p. 169). The ethnographic particularity of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants offers a critical reading of El-Tayeb's work and questions what racial solidarity under QPoC umbrella means for new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants as their ambiguous belongings complicates the opposing images of "us" and "other".

As one of the previous ethnographic works on Turkish LGBTQ and their

perception of whiteness and PoC identities in Berlin, Jennifer Petzen (2004) shares the following observation:

The lack of reflexivity about self-conceptions of whiteness most likely adds to the dismay of *Türkiyelis* when they are not only ethnicized as non-European (because it seems difficult for many white Germans to conceptualize a European Muslim), but also when they are racialized as non-white. Self-identification with whiteness also prevents many, but not all, *Türkiyelis* from building political coalitions with possible partners (4).

Petzen's analysis highlights the racial ambiguity of Turkish people and their intertwined relationship with Germany's racial context. Moreover, her description of racial dynamics among *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ shows that Turkish LGBTQ are both being ethnicized as non-Europeans and being racialized as non-white. However, Petzen detects the twist in this process and adds that some of *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ's self-identifies with whiteness and limit their potential in building political coalitions with other non-white groups in Germany. Even though she identifies the conflict of position and racial ambiguity of Turkish position in Germany, Petzen's conception of whiteness falls short in elaborating the meaning of whiteness with its contextual particularity between Turkey and Germany.

By reading the early observation of Petzen together with El-Tayeb's practical dilemmas on LGBTQ urban minority groups in Europe, *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ's identification with whiteness appears closer to El-Tayeb's first impossible option: identifying as an insider of the national community. This option, according to El-Tayeb, would put urban minority groups in limbo where they are constantly reminded of their assigned status: "other". However, a closer exploration of whiteness and the experiences of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants show that the everyday experience of the participants show divergences on this monolithic reading of whiteness.

Participants' racial and ethnic identification in relation to the QPoC discourses revolves on two topics: (1) whiteness and its contextualizing with the

political and social context of Turkey and Germany, and (2) Turkish identity(ies) in relation to the LGBTQ politics in Turkey and Germany. The first topic provides contextual information on whiteness in Turkey and invites participants to reflect on what they understand from whiteness as a racial category. The second center focuses on Turkish identity(ies) and the contested position of being a Turkish gay in Berlin, an identity that is presented as oxymoron by the mainstream media. Furthermore, the second topic explores how Turkish identity(ies) are perceived in QPoC communities in Berlin. It is important to note that this chapter does not treat race as an unchanging reflection of biology and culture (Maghbouleh, 2017), but as a reflection of amalgamations of differently situated indicators that are put in question with the experience of immigration.

### 5.1 “I am not white, therefore I am...a person of color”: QPoC and racial disillusionment

Whiteness is one of the main factors that influence Turkish LGBTQ migrant’s relationship with QPoC places and communities in Berlin. The experience of racial ambiguity by some of the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants complicates the distinction between what constitutes white and non-white. The contested history of Turkish whiteness is not a new phenomenon; an article from the New York Times dating back to 1909 asks the same questions, “Is the Turk a white Man?” The question was raised during the naturalization procedures in the U.S. and defined whiteness as being a person of “Caucasian race”. The news offers a historical overview of the Turkish heritage of the past thousand years to understand where Turks really come from:

The original Turks were of the yellow ... race. Timur and his Turkish-speaking descendants founded the Mogol or Mongol Empire in India. Jenghiz Khan, a Mongolian, headed the invasion into Russia with hordes of Turkish-speaking soldiery, of Tartar or Manchu stock, from the central and western

steppes of Asia. They swept down into Persia, overran Arabia and Egypt, and invaded Europe to Vienna (1909).

Asia, Middle East, Europe and finally Anatolia, the so-called racial history of Turkey has very little to do with the current defining elements of the whiteness in Europe. However, this particular perspective of history in creating a racial narrative in aspiration of whiteness has been one of the motives of the early Turkish Republic. In his monograph, Murat Ergin (2008) explains the ambiguous racial discourses in Turkey through the Turkish modernization period in 1930s and the model of the West in creating the ideal Turkish identity. This early aspiration of Western whiteness is strengthened by what is called the white Turk ideology, mostly referring to a set of privileges that are shaped around capitalist globalization and neoliberal policies of the 1980s and the idea of being part of a transnational westernized middle class.

Besides its influence on creating an ideal racial position aligned with whiteness, the white Turk ideology appears as the instigator of the public blind eye regarding the discriminations and violence against ethnicized groups in Turkey and treating race as a phantom idea that appears only in moments of crisis (Ergin, 2008). In a close examination of the white Turk ideology, Sedef Arat-Koc's 2007 article "(Some) Turkish Transnationalism(s) in an Age of Capitalist Globalization and Empire: "White Turk" Discourse, the New Geopolitics, and Implications for Feminist Transnationalism" explores how white Turk ideology works in the context of transnational feminist organizing. Arat-Koç (2007) describes the connection between "the West" and the Turkey's ambiguous belonging to whiteness as follows:

... "white Turkishness" involves two complementary and inseparable dimensions of identification and differentiation. First, it involves material connections to Europe and the United States as well as an identification with a certain conception of "the West" – as both the center and the standard of "civilization", and also as the center of global capitalism. Second, it involves differentiation and distancing of self from the "others," those who seem to be standing in the way of connecting with "the West" (p.12).

Following Arat-Koç's concept, the white Turk phenomenon has impacted many

generations, not only in creating an idealized image of Europe but also as distancing from all the “others” that are deemed as the non-European. These elements that reproduces this binary notion of European and others manifest themselves in topics of Islam, Middle East, and classism as marker of certain Turkish people as unfit to the ideals of the European-like urban bourgeois. The reading of the white Turk as an ideology aims to show the term’s impact in defining not only the rising middle-class of the 1980s, but also its manifestation in everyday lives.

The term white Turk appeared as a common reference point during my interviews as a way that participants made sense of the whiteness that was known to them before their immigration. Ten out of twelve of research participants were born and raised in the bigger cities of Turkey (Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir) in mostly middle- and upper middle-class backgrounds. Considering that moving out of Turkey requires certain socio-economic safety at first place, I could only reach a limited number of participants who would define their background as less than middle-class in Turkey’s context. The middle-class stands for people who were raised by working parents or a working parent who had white collar job. During my interviews, the term “white Turk” first appears as almost synonym with ethnic Turk background with middle-class privileges, not having an ethnic minority background, and speaking fluent Turkish. Even though all of research participants knew the concept, only three confirmed that their family would consider themselves white Turk. Considering the stigma around the white Turk identity with the criticism of being too elitist and out of political nuance, it was not too unexpected on my side to collect lower number of white Turk identification (Mayr, 2007).

In one of the interviews, Serkan, a 26-year old gay man (see Table 1 for details), refers to whiteness in relation to the impacts of the white Turk ideology:

I was not really aware of it before, maybe because I am from Izmir. Izmir has this special representation of being very progressive and West-like but now I

see that claiming the western-ness or whiteness has always been an illusion. Compared to whiteness, QPoC identity is something that fits me more. I am not white; therefore, I am...a person of color (personal communication, 2019).

Serkan's experience draws a narrative that overlaps with Petzen's analysis of Turkish LGBTQ identification with whiteness. Serkan starts with his background in Turkey and later explains how he was confronted with racialized experiences in Europe, which eventually leads him to a binary in which he found himself as a person of color. The missing part of Petzen's analysis is answered with Serkan's rationalization of his identification with whiteness: his "West-like" and progressive background in Turkey. The whiteness that Serkan references is an ideal that was promoted with "West-like" image of progressive politics in Turkey. Serkan adds that his experience in Europe enforced a feeling of disillusionment, that his perception of his whiteness was not based on his racial position outside of Turkey.

Serkan's reflection on his racial position in Europe constitutes another layer of what Maghbouleh's and Bucholtz's works explain about racial liminality and passages, where racial hinges (Maghbouleh, 2017) captures Serkan's liminality and closes the doors of whiteness that he benefited from in Turkey's context.

Nevertheless, Serkan presents his options only between two: white or PoC, which leaves no room for people in-between. Carrying the discussion on racial liminality to El-Tayeb's practical dilemmas, Serkan presents the first impossible option clearly: claiming whiteness in Europe as a Turkish person, where they are constantly reminded of their assigned status as other. Serkan chooses another option by claiming the PoC, which he believes to be more fitting to his position in Berlin. This choice complicates El-Tayeb's second practical dilemma: accepting the outsider status and to identify as migrants and foreigner, which El-Tayeb (2011) claims to put racialized groups in a form of solidarity that is not spatially available to them. In Serkan's experience of claiming QPoC as a racial definition and identifying as

migrant and/or outsider in Europe, he does not connect his QPoC claim to an elusive ethnic-root. On the contrary, his ethnic Turk background urges him to claim whiteness instead of uniting under non-white position. Therefore, Serkan's chooses to claim QPoC as a method to have control over his everyday racialized experiences and claims non-white position as an option that is more available to him. Ultimately, Serkan's case shows that queering his ethnicity as a gay Turk man is impossible, not only for the reasons of normative European model of national belonging as El-Tayeb discusses, but also for the reasons that Serkan carries with him to Europe, such as the disdain from Turk identity. In this case, QPoC appears as a new form of racialized identity that is post-national, yet racial - an identity that claims a solidarity without a singular notion of homeland.

Other participants show similarity with Serkan's narrative as they also come into realization that their definition of whiteness did not translate the same in Europe's context. In the light of the previous discussions on racial ambiguity of Turkish experience in Europe, I asked research participants to reflect on their process of understanding the racial meaning of their position between Europe and Turkey. Selin, as other participants, explains this process as an outcome of her immigration: "I was never faced with my own whiteness before I moved away from Turkey. I never considered my identity as a racial topic in Turkey" (personal communication, 2019). Selin's mother is a Yugoslavian refugee who fled to Turkey before Selin's birth. Selin was raised among Turks and her white and Western phenotype gave her the comfort to navigate in Turkish spaces without being questioned about her racial and ethnic background. Although her parents' Turkish was not perfect, she does not recall facing any racism or discrimination on the topics of ethnicity and race. One of the most important part with Selin's experience is that she realizes her whiteness in Turkey after experiencing racialization elsewhere as a non-white person.

Most of the ethnic Turk participants first experience racialization in Europe where the perception of whiteness is shaped with the definition of European whiteness. One different example comes from Selin, who lived in South Africa before moving to Berlin. As she recalls, facing her whiteness coincided with her arrival to South Africa: “In a post-apartheid country where every shade of black is being discriminated against and treated differently, no one would sit down and discuss whether being a Muslim is a racialized identity or not. If you are not black, you are white, and you represent a colonizer race” (personal communication, 2019). Selin’s experience as a foreigner in Africa grants her a critical perspective on the relationality of racial dynamics. Similar to this experience, many of research participants confirmed that immigration was the main triggering point that pushed them to question their racial ambiguity in Europe. Nermin defines her moment of disillusionment as follows: “Now looking back, I can even say that I got into the plane as white and left the plane as Brown” (personal communication, 2019). This spatial narrative of leaving one country and landing into another as a moment that marks the shift in one’s ethnic and racial position gives an idea about the impact that immigration has over the racial identification. Moreover, Nermin explains that her racial realization is not a moment, but a group of situations that have put her in difference from European whiteness and led her to believe that she is something else.

As a continuation of the immigration and its effect on participants’ conception of their racial identities, the interactions explained under the concept of passing proves a great impact in the racial identification of participants. Derin reflects on her racial experiences as follows:

I can say that I slowly discovered that I am a person of color, and this discovery started after I moved to Europe. It was not the first time I visited Europe, because it is not a kind of knowledge you can have when you stay for a short period of time. I was first thinking that calling this category was not fair for someone like me [meaning white-passing] but the racialized experiences of discrimination have proved to me that passing does not make

me different (personal communication, 2019).

Race-based experiences of discrimination and bias push Derin to reassess her racial position in Europe. She describes these experiences as a trigger in the process of racial disillusionment, which she calls a slow discovery, of her racial position in Berlin. Her way of seeing the shift between her whiteness to PoC identity wonders around the notion of “becoming” rather than a static position of being. Derin’s discovery starts when she moves to Europe and reveals that her race is a visible component of her everyday interactions in Berlin. It is important to note that passing here appears to describe Derin’s white-passing-ness, which she uses to define her lighter phenotype and fluent English. In this identification, Derin chooses to identify with the outsider position but sees her phenotype and other background as contradictory of what PoC stands for in Berlin.

Negotiating their ambiguous belonging to QPoC in Berlin, some of the new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants focus on how their sexual orientation/gender identity has affected their lives in Turkey and Berlin. The experience of racialization causes some participants to reconsider how relevant their sexual orientation/gender identity is without their racial identities in Berlin. Nermin explains this complex exchange between her lesbian identity and her PoC identity as follows: “I was a lesbian woman in Turkey because I speak the right Turkish and I was raised in a middle-class Turkish family. But here in Germany, I am a non-white lesbian woman, and this is the only way possible for me to experience myself” (personal communication, 2019). Nermin’s experience shows that that her lesbian identity intersects with her racialized experiences, which was not the case in her life in Turkey. As a migrant Turkish woman living in Berlin, her non-white identity became attached to the way she identifies.

As one of the outcomes of participants’ experiences with sexualized and

racialized experiences, QPoC position appears as an option for a racial identification that is not attached to national boundaries but arises from the experiences of racialized LGBTQ in Europe. Following Serkan's comments on deciding between whiteness or PoC, the shift in racial identification can appear as a decision between what seems to be fitting to participants' experiences in Europe or as Nermin's experience: a spatial interaction that position them from one category to another. However, in all the cases, the process leads new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants into a fear of being a fraud. Ozge defines this feeling with as mix of shame due to her belief that she enjoyed a type of whiteness in Turkey and fear that the validity of her claim as a QPoC can be questioned by others in Germany. This reflection on the fear of being a fraud-QPoC surfaces from the experiences of racial ambiguity of white-passing Turkish people in QPoC places. This fear troubles the QPoC belonging of the participants and leaves them with uncertainty where they find and loose the meaning of their racial position in Berlin.

## 5.2 "Are you gay or Turk?" Turkish identity and QPoC subjectivity

In 2008, a small theater hosted a play in Kreuzberg showing a number of interviews of gay men of Turkish or Kurdish descent, discussing their experience in Germany as gay migrants. The title of the play was '*Jenseits – Bist du schwul oder bist du Türke?*' which in English means "Beyond: Are You Gay or Are You a Turk?" (Vivar, Lutz, and Supik, 2016). The title is an implied reference to the categorical impossibility of being a gay Turk as Turk was attached to homophobia and gay was attached to non-Turk in the mainstream German context. After the event, Der Tagesspiegel covered the play with the following comments: "In Germany they are the minority within the minority. And they actually should not even exist: gay Turks are taboo, living between tradition and new homeland" (Der Tagesspiegel 2008,

2016). A position that is described as minority within minority, a category that should not even exist. The 2008 news coverage of Turkish LGBTQ identities in Germany mirrors yet another practical dilemma that is still being traced in the LGBTQ circles of Berlin: what happens when a Turkish LGBTQ claims a racial/ethnic identity attached to the image of homophobia in Germany? Participants' relationships with QPoC and the rising awareness of racialized experiences leads participants to reconsider their position as Turkish people in Berlin and revisit the impossible category or of being a Turkish gay.

In order to give more context, the impossibility of being both Turkish and LGBTQ relies heavily on the stereotype of Turkish homophobia which, in Sara Ahmed's () term, sticks an affective relationship between homosexuality and Turkishness and emanates fear from "Turkishness". There have been several cases where German media covered homophobic incidents as part of non-Western, Turkish ways of handling with non-normative sexual identities (see *Jungle World* "Homophobia among Turks and other Germans" 2008). Reflecting on these cases, Haritaworn (2015) discusses the way Turkish homophobia is treated in Germany as "...an object that can be known, defined, described and acted on" (p.109). But, what does it actually mean to hold an identity that – "should not even exist?" and, what do participants experience within QPoC places when they voice their ethnic/racial background? The question of how Turkish identity appears in the racial identification of the participants centers around two main topics within the overall QPoC umbrella: (1) the (im)possibility of the ethnosexual position of Turkish LGBTQ in Berlin, and (2) the challenges of balancing Turkey's political context and its representation in Berlin with the awareness on the discursive tools, such as the use of *Türkiyeli* instead of Turk.

My experience with the prevalent influence of the topic of "Turkish

homophobia” in Germany has been multiplied in non-Turkish LGBTQ places in Berlin. Most of these experiences involved a conversation where people shared their experiences with homophobia-related discrimination or violence with an image that was simply described as a “Turkish man”. This simple referent to describe the perpetrator of a homophobic incident seemed odd to me at first because the description of “Turkish man” was very ambiguous. However, the simple reference to Turkish man seemed mostly efficient for the crowd to not ask any further questions, as if these two identifiers anticipated a homophobic incident, almost like a signifier that holds other meanings, such as heterosexual, working class, underserved. I had a similar experience with the topic of Turkish homophobia, which put me in a position to reflect on my experience as a Turkish man in a QPoC space. The event was called “How Do We Survive Spaces We Were Never Meant to Enter?”, organized by activist and writer Rachael Moore and artist Isaiah Lopaz to share survival strategies for Black and QPoC in Europe. The event started with a short reading from Audre Lorde and continued with a joint conversation. Not so long after, an African-American participant raised his hand and took the stage to share his experiences with discrimination and homophobia in Neukölln. While he was describing the scene, he underlined that Turkish people in Neukölln were the perpetrators of the homophobic incident mixed with incidents motivated with racism and ignorance. His experiences involved people making fun of his colorful clothing, his above the average height, and mocking him with stereotypes on Black people having larger penis sizes. As I was sitting uncomfortable with the fact that I was, too a Turkish man living in Neukölln, I wondered what my Turkishness meant in the greater background of that evening. As I walked into that room as a Turkish man defining myself as the recipient of the event’s call, my identification with QPoC did not make me more or less Turkish. Instead, the attachment with QPoC made my Turkish identity less

threatening. Therefore, in that moment I wasn't queering my ethnicity by claiming an impossible position of being a Turkish gay as El-Tayeb discusses, but rather I was relying on the safety of QPoC formation that offers a temporal suspension of ethnic confrontations, such as the one that was claimed by the African-American participant and Neukölln Turkish community.

Another moment of clash between Turkishness, LGBTQ identity and PoC identification is when the participants are being asked "where are you from?", especially in LGBTQ spaces. Nermin, 27 years old activist and academic, explains her experiences as follows: "I was not really paying attention at first but trying to convince strangers that you are Turkish is a challenge" (personal communication, 2019). Nermin believes that her queerness has a big role in the way people perceive her ethnicity. She also adds: "Passing as a Turkish person in a LGBTI space in Berlin is almost impossible, I also realize that my queerness pushes me away from the Turkish community [meaning heterosexual first- and second-generation people] in any interaction". Nermin's experiences show that being LGBTQ complicates the way she is being perceived by people in Berlin. Therefore, her sexual identity becomes a factor that creates the ambiguity around her racial identity. This information adds another layer of meaning for what constitutes the position of being racially in-between (Maghbouleh, 2017). In Nermin's experience, her queer identity pushes her to the limits of her own ethnic identity and makes it more challenging for other people to perceive her as Turkish. One of the reasons is the way Turkish identity is strongly connected with non- or even anti-LGBTQ sentiments in Berlin's context.

Nermin reflects more on this process and explains this complex exchange between her ethnicity and her sexual orientation with the concept of passing and adds "saying that I'm from Turkey never satisfies others" (personal communication, 2019). In this exchange, being asked the question of "Where are you from?" stands

as a moment of misfitting to the space where people are not being asked where they are coming from. The first step of this interaction implies that the person directing the question assumes that you are from elsewhere. Nermin's experience shows that her response to the question creates dissatisfaction caused by another form of misfitting, this time to the ideal Turkishness in Berlin's context.

Following the discussions around being both LGBTQ and Turkish, the second center of tension revolves around the question of national identity and its ethnic connotations in Berlin with the distinctions between ethnic Turk, *Türkiyeli* and Turkish-speaking. As I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, *Türkiyeli* is used as an alternative way of defining ethnic-national identity of being from Turkey, instead of stating Turk. Among twelve interviews, nine of research participants accept their ethnic Turk background. However, only three of nine find it relevant or appropriate to declare the Turk identity as part of their experience in Berlin. One of the main motivations behind using *Türkiyeli* is to avoid ethnic association with Turk identity and to represent other ethnicities, such as Kurds, Armenians, Pontus, Roma people from Turkey (Bodemann and Yurdakul, 2006). The motivation for the participants' disassociation from Turk identity comes with various reasons, mostly related to participant's negative perception of Turkey's nationalist and exclusionary politics, the denial and oppression of the Kurdish ethnic identity through state coercion and forced Turkification of other ethnic groups in Turkey. As an alternative, claiming *Türkiyeli* allows these participants to indicate their belonging to Turkey as a spatial, geographic term and to avoid ethnic association with its nation-building process.

The disassociation from ethnic Turk identity plays a role in claiming other ethnic/racial identities, including QPoC in Germany. Moreover, this dissociation does not only show its impact at the verbal level but also in participants' way of understanding their ethnic/racial position in Germany. Serkan, an ethnically Turk but

*Türkiyeli* identified gay man, reflects on his impression of Turk identity and explains his struggle in claiming the pieces of belonging that are associated with Turk identity:

There is a negative connotation of being Turk or being called (declared) one. I feel like by stating this position, I am reproducing a nationalist, imperialist set of values. But at the same time, Turkish culture has to be somewhere in my life. I am Turk, but I cannot be. For these reasons, I am feeling pushed away from my culture and even from my religion. I do not know how I can find peace with my Turk identity. Then, the question appears - who am I? (personal communication, 2019).

Serkan's connection with Turk identity leads him to a conflicting state between the desire to be rooted in an ethnic culture and managing the sense of guilt from Turk identity's power over ethnic minority groups in Turkey. Serkan confirms that as someone who was raised in Izmir, a progressive city with high values of Turkish nationalism, he gained his critical awareness on the issues of race and ethnicity after his arrival in Istanbul. Therefore, his disassociation from Turk identity is connected to his immigration experience and his political surroundings in Berlin.

As Serkan's experience shows, the shift between disassociation with Turk identity and shift into different ethnic/racial identities such as *Türkiyeli* and QPoC is connected to the experience of immigration. This shift is also visible in organizational level, as observed with GladT e.V. (Gays and Lesbians *aus der Türkei* (Eng. "From Turkey")). Following the information collected from GladT e.V. volunteers who took part in my pilot interviews, GladT e.V. was first formed as TurkGay with the purpose of helping Turkish LGBTQ people, mostly from the first-wave migrants. With the 1990s second-wave and the rising number of Kurdish communities and activism, the group was later renamed as GladT with the definition of *aus der Türkei* (Eng. "from Turkey") instead of Turk. Later in 2015, after engagement with various migrant communities and a new administration, GladT e.V. evolved into a QPoC community and publicly announced itself as "...a self-

organization of blacks and lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, inter and queer people of color in Berlin” (GladT e.V., 2019).

Following the findings of this chapter, the experience of immigration appears as the common element that shifts participants’ perception of their racial/ethnic identities. In understanding the dynamic of some Turkish migrants’ identification with whiteness, the analysis of white Turk ideology as a transnational ideal to ally with European and other Western countries and with whiteness plays an important role. The experiences of racialization are usually described with the concept of passing, both used in the context where participants defined themselves as white-passing in QPoC places and brown-passing in the greater background of Berlin. Moreover, the racial ambiguity of Turkish identity in the binary representation of whiteness and PoCness pushes participants in choosing PoC identity.

Ultimately the experience of the participants proves that the question of ethnic/racial identification for new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants creates certain dead-ends and impossible positions which complicates El-Tayeb's practical dilemmas that I mentioned in Chapter 1. Firstly, claiming a European identity is not an option for the participants of this work. However, some of them articulate their proximity to whiteness with the concept of white-passing, used as a way to describe the impacts of the racial loopholes (Maghbouleh, 2017) leading to their treatment as white people. Nevertheless, none of the participants claimed white-status in European context and showed their racialized experiences as proof of their non-white status. The second impossible option is to claim their national identities as LGBTQ Turks, which resonates with El-Tayeb's second impossible option "claiming the identity of the national community” (El-Tayeb, 2011, p. 169). As much as this national community is spatially not available to them, the overriding presence of Turkish community and the transnational bound between Turkey and Berlin challenges El-

Tayeb's claim. Moreover, the problem that some of the participants encounter with claiming their national identity is being constantly reminded that their identification is deemed impossible, or unusual in Berlin's context - and leaves their audience in dissatisfaction or in denial. Also, the participants question the political meaning of claiming the Turk as a national identity and prioritize to distance themselves from the ethnic connotation integrated in ethnic Turk identity. This phenomenon leads us to a third (im)possible option: identification with QPoC. The experience of the participants shows that their racial ambiguity in Berlin and their desire to disassociate from Turk identity lead them to find new migrant identities that are available to their experience in Berlin. QPoC appears as an answer to El-Tayeb's practical dilemma as it offers an outsider status without a requirement of an idealized "homeland" or ethnic-roots.

## CHAPTER 6

### QPOC COALITION AND THE NEW WAVE TURKISH LGBTQ MIGRANTS

This chapter offers a preliminary analysis of what the relationship between QPoC communities and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants offers in terms of building new political solidarity and an idea of unity. The word solidarity originates in the French language with a simple definition: unity of purpose. Going back to Lux's solidarity event, the purpose of that event was to protect Lux from the structural dispossession that she is destined to as a working-class, queer, HIV+, trans woman of color in Berlin. Lux appeared on the stage to share her story and in her final address, she did not only ask the crowd to recognize and act upon her vulnerability but called them for mutual recognition of the social realities that are being experienced by people like her in Europe. Even though it may seem clear at first that Lux's experience with her dispossession serves as a ground for coalitional work, her dependency on others does not transform into solidarity right away. As it is noted by Judith Butler (2017), "the realities of dependency and interdependency do not necessarily or automatically transform into some beautiful state of coexistence; it is not the same as social harmony; rather, solidarity is something that must be created in the difficult coalition work across differences" (Shippen et al. 2017, p. 263). The different coalition work among QPoC has mostly been overlooked either due to QPoC place-making practices and their limited access to public, or due to the conviction that QPoC communities already know how to do solidarity work as a group of politically driven activists. This coalitional work becomes more visible with the experiences of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, as their belonging to QPoC is contested and always has to be negotiated with the dynamics of place-making practices and passing.

It is important to note that the purpose of this chapter is not to compare the experiences of Lux with the experiences of this work's participants, who mostly share a middle- and upper middle-class socio-economic background with high language skills and access to higher (graduate level) education. Therefore, I am particularly cautious not to overestimate the QPoC experience as a homogenous unity, but as a group of different experiences that is built among LGBTQ with different immigration stories and backgrounds. This heterogeneity among QPoC is the driving force behind QPoC community's coalition practices. This chapter examines Berlin's 2018 "Out of Many Exhibition" and Jane P. Bucket's "We nourish each other with recipes of Resilience" (2018) and offers a qualitative content analysis to understand the core values of QPoC solidarity in Berlin. After identifying the main themes in the aforementioned texts, I ask participants about their experience with QPoC solidarity and new political responsiveness that is derived from their relationship with QPoC in Berlin.

Before proceeding to examine the forms of QPoC coalition which have been introduced to the research participants, it will be necessary to understand the core factors that form QPoC coalition in Berlin. Haritaworn's (2015) monograph in Berlin explains the "QPoC coalition" as a unity that is based on respect for oppressed people's right to self-organization, as well as a will to position ourselves in relation to both our marginalized and our dominant identities. While certain bodies are read as morally inferior, out of place, and expandable, unity among people who endure discriminatory experiences that nurtures a form of coalition that Haritaworn observes and encourages. The idea of "coalition" also appears repeatedly in Audre Lorde's exploration of Black feminist movement as united but not unanimous (Molina, HoSang, and Gutiérrez, 2019). Lorde (2019) adds that the relationship between unity as a heterogenous community has to be accomplished with "the difficult labor

of ... unromantic and tedious work necessary to forge meaningful coalitions” (p.14). Therefore, I define QPoC coalition work as practices that are aimed to create community and unity among QPoC in Berlin, which often surface as difficult labor of unromantic and tedious work. Coalition work among QPoC includes the interactions that are formed in QPoC places and other visual and written materials that focus on QPoC unity in Berlin. “Out of Many” (2018), an exhibition that focuses on LGBTQ Black and QPoC artists in Berlin released the following exhibition text that can be seen as a strong example of QPoC coalition work:

It is when we combine our strengths and come together as communities that we are best able to push back against oppressive structures and create shared spaces that center joy, love and dignity, and celebrate our differences and commonalities (“Out of Many Exhibition Text”, 2018).

The text, which is written by the show’s artist collective, addresses a tension between the collective “we” and oppressive structures, pointing to the importance of unity and creating shared spaces to push back against oppressive structures. The defining characteristics of the coalition work are centering joy, love and dignity, which I refer to as the affective component, and celebrating difference and commonalities, which I refer to as the coalitional component. It is important to underline that the affective component and the coalitional component are experienced within QPoC under the name of difficult coalition work (Shippen et al., 2017) aiming to make QPoC coexistence possible.

Understanding QPoC coalition work as practices balanced between affective component and coalitional component with the aim of achieving QPoC coexistence, Jane P. Bucket’s, “We nourish each other with Recipes of Resilience” (2018) is a reference point to understand the further dynamics of QPoC coexistence. Bucket's drawing is an art piece exhibited at the “Out of Many” exhibition and illustrates the complex relationship that nurtures coalition, resilience, and solidarity among QPoC. Bucket’s drawing describes a scene in which mostly gender non-conforming,

LGBTQ Black and QPoC characters are embracing each other with tears and a gesture of gratefulness, standing in front of a stew and feeding each other with, what I understand from the title of the work, resilience. Bucket's drawing illustrates the affective component of the QPoC's unity with figures that are drawn in a strong mixture of joy and sadness. Likewise, the coalitional component is represented with the figures' effort to feed each other with the resilience they build with tears and joy. The sense of unity and coalition are almost tangible with all the figures holding each other as a united whole.



Figure 2. Jane P. Bucket "We nourish each other with recipes of resilience," 2018

Furthermore, the figures in the back row are younger, which gives a hint of inter-generational communication in forming both resilience and resistance in QPoC communities.

Thinking critically about the representation of QPoC resilience and coalition

in Bucket's drawing and the "Out of Many" text, the core of the QPoC coalition unites against the vulnerabilities in relation to the experiences of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, socio-legal status, legal status. It is discussed by Butler and Athanasiou (2013) that these conditions of deprivation and vulnerability have potential to create exposure to alterity for collective belongings and communities. Therefore, interrogating vulnerability both as being subjected to systemic oppression and a ground to make people's interdependency and need-for-others visible, vulnerability not only indicates the potential for harm but highlights a relationality between QPoC. Without romanticizing the violence and discrimination that QPoC experience in Europe, a further analysis of the dualistic reading of vulnerability may characterize the relationality that was presented in the "Out of Many" text as the main tension that forms the collective voice in the paragraph.

As an example of QPoC's coalitional practices, the Khalass!!! Manifesto represents a clear idea of differences among migrants and QPoC which, nevertheless, unite their common vulnerability: "...stop investing money into anti-homophobia projects in [Berlin-]Wedding, [Berlin-] Schöneberg and [Berlin-] Neukölln that target us, the dangerous brown mass, and start dealing with homo-, and transphobia within the white society" (Khalass!!! Manifesto as cited in Haritaworn 2015). The element of unity that binds the QPoC together appears as the vulnerability of QPoC due to the rising investments and the risk of gentrification which would eventually force QPoC out of their neighborhoods. In this respect, reading vulnerability as a marker of the limits of self-sufficiency and as the source of relationality and interdependence, the main element of the QPoC coalitional practices, appears as different experiences of exclusion and marginalization which fall under the QPoC's framework.

Reflecting on the experiences of the participants in QPoC places, the element

of difference in forming coalitional practices, the QPoC coalitional practices in Berlin occur mostly through nurturing friendship and sharing the experiences of mistreatment, discrimination, and violence. Another study of QPoC coalitional practices by Sa'ed Atshan and Darnell L. Moore (2004), offers a detailed understanding of the importance of friendship in building coalition. Atshan and Moore focuses on the Black and Palestinian coalition on the topics of anti-Black discrimination and Israel-Palestine conflict, that are formed through a reciprocal understanding which is "... grounded in and animated by affect – namely, love and empathy" (pg. 4, Atshan and Moore 2014). Although Atshan and Moore do not claim a unity under QPoC umbrella, their interaction as two LGBTQ who are coming from different standpoints prove the importance of the affective component in creating coalition. Their connection is built around friendship and intimacy, both creating reciprocal consciousness about political issues that are utmost important to them. It is clear that QPoC coalitional practices also echoes this individual engagement taking place in QPoC gatherings and offering platforms for people to form friendships.

Following Atshan and Moore's formulation of friendship in building coalition and expanding this perspective to everyday experiences of the research participants and QPoC in Berlin, Cenk's experience with GladT e.V.'s QMoC meetings appears as a good example to highlight the challenges of friendship as a practice of alliance. Cenk was asked to explain Turkey's oppressive LGBTQ politics by two other American participants and found himself in a conflicted position: on the one hand he understood the value of teaching others, who are willing to offer support and care, on the other hand, he suspected that the differences between the American QPoC and Turkish people would obstruct the dialogue in the QMoC meeting. Cenk's effort to explain Turkey's situation with his experiences growing as a Turkish gay man in Ankara to people whom he just met illustrates an example for the QPoC coalitional

practices. Nevertheless, this coalitional work does not occur in a state of instant happiness and gratification. Cenk appreciates the value in forming relationships and communities; however, he expects QPoC to recognize and respect his sensitivities towards his home country and his legal disadvantages as a Turkish citizen in Germany. Another similar reflection comes from dealing with the past, particularly the effects of national education, and learning new ways of interacting with national identities. Ozge reflects on the hardships of unlearning stereotypes of Arabs, who were represented as "traitors of Turkish people" as follows: "I was taught from the very early age that the Arabs were not our (Turkish people) friends. The separation between Turkishness and Arab identity was so clear that I am still having a hard time adjusting myself to this sense of community" (personal communication, 2019). In Ozge's experience, white Turk ideology (Arat-Koc, 2007) appears as a strong influencer in the way she conceptualized Arab identities. Different from the earlier chapter on white Turk ideology and the ethno-national identification of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, Ozge's comments shows the white Turk ideology in action, creating an obstacle based on stereotypes and hindering the coalition work of QPoC.

Despite the hardships of overcoming obstacles caused by differences in experiences of immigration and other factors such as the effects of white Turk ideology, one way that the QPoC places and coalition work nurture unity is through reciprocal political responsiveness among QPoC. It is important to note that measuring the impact of QPoC communities on political responsiveness is challenging since none of the QPoC interactions happen in isolation of various political elements and social occasions. Therefore, I am careful not to overestimate the role of QPoC as the sole initiator of certain political responsiveness.

Understanding this complex relationship, I asked participants to explain the topics

they have been introduced in QPoC places and secondly asked to further elaborate on particular political subjects. In this way, I was able to understand how participants became familiar with political topic without interfering with their narrative. As a response to the second question, participants listed the following topics: Black Lives Matter (BLM) activism, activism against anti-Islam racism, activism for African diaspora in Europe, and the topic of Israel-Palestinian conflict. As an example, Tuba's experience with QPoC places create a strong consciousness on the issues of African diaspora and Germany's colonial past: "I see these [QPoC] spaces as knowledge hubs to share experiences of discrimination and strategies for survival. Joining a QPoC community with other migrant queer women, I learned many things about the African diaspora in Berlin and Germany's colonial past". In nurturing mutual recognition of the political needs and sensitivities, two of research participants share the belief that QPoC places create platforms for sharing stories and opening up spaces for refugee, migrant and other QPoC narratives, which they were not familiar with before. These interactions serve as the basis for a new and critical analysis of the social realities and structures in which one is not at the center. Ulas explains his experience as follows: "The topic of Palestine was always a contested one because I did not know much about it before but sharing a space with Palestinian queers and listening to their experiences changed my idea". Similar to Ulas's experience, most of research participants confirmed that they became familiar with the Black Lives Matter movement and Israel-Palestine conflict through QPoC places. However, when I ask follow-up questions with regards to how they act upon these causes, I mostly receive answers, such as not going to certain pro-Israel coffees and bars, re-posting or following social media accounts, and finally engaging with the topics more in everyday conversations. The openness to form political responsiveness around these topics is seen as the outcome of QPoC place-making

practices and QPoC communities and grounded in affective and coalitional components of QPoC unity.

Following the findings of this chapter, the solidarity among QPoC communities in Berlin is based on either bearing witness or listening to life experiences of other QPoC. The practice of sharing stories and creating places for QPoC narratives allow QPoC to analyze race, gender, and sexuality-based inequalities and oppressions. Participants' interaction with QPoC communities and places demonstrates a great potential in learning about new political agendas and developing responsiveness around these topics.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The decision to immigrate to Berlin as an LGBTQ from Turkey and facing various legal obstacles and social stigmatization have numerous implications on new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants. Focusing on the experiences of the participants, who are considered as "new wave Turkish migrants" by limited sources ("New wave in Berlin," n.d.; Türkmen, 2019), the experience of immigration has changed their way of perceiving their racial identities in relation to a new possibility for racial identification, QPoC. In understanding the relationship between QPoC and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants, this thesis built on three focus points: participants' interaction with QPoC places and place-making practices, participants' reflection on their racial and ethnic identification, and finally participants' reflection on their political responsiveness in relation to QPoC in Berlin.

It is important to underline that some of the common characteristics of the participants, such as their socio-economic and ethnonational backgrounds limits a variegated analysis of the relationship between QPoC and new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants in Berlin. Moreover, the small number of participants also limits the representative capacity of this thesis. Therefore, a variegated study with a larger number of participants may better reflect on the varying effects of white Turk ideology and racial identification of Turkish migrants in Berlin. Nevertheless, the majority number of ethnic Turk participants allow this study to pose critical questions for further studies on identification and alliance practices of Turkish migrants in Europe.

Following the foot-steps of the participants in Berlin, the first focus point explored the relationship between QPoC place-making practices and the participants.

In doing so, listening to participants' experiences on how the QPoC place-making strategies are practiced in Berlin opened a critical ground to problematize the notion of safety and safe-space policies. As the close implementation of Hanhardt's analytical approach and Bruce-Jones' formulization of racial profiling and the concept of selectors showed, it is clear that the QPoC safe space strategies in Berlin follow race-based profiling with selectors warning the ones who are marked as non-QPoC. Following the analytical questions of Hanhardt, this race-based approach aims to eliminate white people to minimize the anticipated racialized encounters between white people and QPoC. Nevertheless, the racial ambiguity of research participants complicates this distinction between white and PoC and leaves them in a racial loophole (Maghbouleh, 2017). This racial loophole subjugates the participants to a racial position where their on-the-ground racialized experiences situate them to whiteness or PoCness in momentary interactions. As a deviation from the participants' racial loophole and their interaction in QPoC places, some of the participants implement the concept of passing to show that they have control over the outcomes of their interactions.

In line with Bucholtz's work on passing, I analyzed participants' experiences to question the presupposition of passing interactions: passing experience indicates that one's ethnicity is ambiguous, passing is an active construction and not a passive subjugation. Connecting to Bucholtz's core presuppositions to the analysis of QPoC safe space strategies, I discuss that the participants' racial ambiguity and their wish to associate themselves with QPoC places urge some participants to claim their agency on the outcome of their racialized experiences. In some cases, being visibly-LGBTQ or having a company of QPoC-passing friend are shown as elements that participants implement to increase the chance of the participants to pass as QPoC. On the other hand, some participants who define themselves as white-passing feel conflicted

about their presence in QPoC places and do not even acknowledge their agential power over their racialized interactions. Thus, they prefer to withhold themselves from QPoC places with strict safe space policies rather than engaging with the outcomes of their racial loophole. Ultimately, the experiences of the participants in my study show a practical dilemma in QPoC safe space strategies: they serve as a tool of isolationism for racially ambiguous groups who seek safety and community away from racialized experiences under QPoC places.

The second focus point reflected on the racial and ethnic identification of the participants, which made the effects of white Turk ideology visible, particularly on the participants' demographic: "talented migrants (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019) with middle- upper-middle class background and from the urban capitals of Turkey. The effects of white Turk ideology are visible in two main areas: participants' ethno-racial identification and their alliance strategies in Berlin. The underlying effects of the first area answers Jennifer Petzen's 2004 ethnography on *Türkiyeli* LGBTQ's home-making practices and shows that self-identification with whiteness among some Turkish LGBTQ may connected to dynamics outside of Germany. Therefore, the whiteness that appears as an ambiguous reference in Turkish migrants' self-identification in Petzen's analysis should be studied both in consideration of Turkey's historical context and Turkish migrants' experience in Germany. Fifteen years after Petzen's research on Turkish LGBTQ migrants, the participants of this work find themselves in a similar ambivalence towards their racial identity, especially in their relationship with QPoC in Berlin. Expanding on this question on identification, this thesis expanded on El-Tayeb's formulation of queering ethnicity in Europe, in which she discussed that groups, such as Muslim feminists, hip-hop crews embody an identity that is declared "impossible". The "impossible" in El-Tayeb's work appears in two practical dilemmas: the first is the impossibility of identifying as the insider of

the national community, and the second is to identify as an outsider and claiming to belong to an elusive idea of homeland that is not available spatially.

In the light of the participants' experiences, the findings of this thesis complicated El-Tayeb's assumption in the following ways: firstly, the participants' experiences with racial identification showed that they are not only being reminded of their assigned status as "other" within German national community, but also being pushed outside as "other" in QPoC in Berlin. It is important to note that the perception of whiteness and PoC are clearly separated in participants' interviews and their logic of belonging as almost two opposing categories. Therefore, their logic fails to represent the experiences of racially ambiguous participants, including people who define themselves as white-passing Turks. Secondly, the experience of being assigned as "other" in German national community or in QPoC appeared not a constant or homogeneous reaction towards the participants but rather an ever-changing negotiation that is expressed by the participants with "passing". I analyzed passing through Bucholtz's approach and have interpreted it as an active construction of social relationships for people who are ethnically ambiguous in a given society. Taking from Bucholtz's understanding of passing and reading it with Maghbouleh's formulization of the "racial loopholes", the experiences of the participants showed that the racial dynamics of their everyday life are connected to the on-the-ground experiences which open and close the doors of whiteness or PoCness to the participants with very little control over the consequences.

As an addition to participants' identification with white or PoC categories, the findings of this thesis also introduced other dilemmas that participants experience in Berlin, particularly related to participants' ethno-national identities. The participants face dissatisfaction and surprise when they declare their Turkish identity in LGBTQ places in Berlin, or their LGBTQ identity in heteronormative Turkish places.

Therefore, the categories of being "Turk" and "gay" stand almost like an oxymoron in Berlin's context. Moreover, participants' experiences proved that they are not only under the influence of Germany's context: ten out of twelve participants feel the need to distance themselves from ethnic Turk category due to the impossibility that is caused by the negative perception of Turkey's nationalist and exclusionary politics, such as the denial and oppression of the Kurdish ethnic identity through state coercion and forced Turkification of other ethnic groups in Turkey.

Despite the obstacles they face in positioning themselves in or out of QPoC in Berlin, the third focus point of the thesis showed that participants have a strong interest in forming coalitions and imagining coexistence in QPoC places in Berlin. The QPoC coalition work explored in this thesis proved the complexity of relationships that are formed among racialized LGBTQ in Berlin. The QPoC coalition work involves a strong affective component holding QPoC together with bonds, such as friendship and other forms of LGBTQ intimacies. As an addition to the affective component, QPoC coalition work requires a coalitional component creating the core of QPoC coexistence.

As the findings of the qualitative content analysis and interviews showed, the coalitional component involves QPoC dealing with subjects and stories that are connected to their racialized experiences or experiences of discrimination and mistreatment. Following the relationship between the participants and QPoC coalition work, I argued that the participants' presence in QPoC coalitional practices challenge the classic representation of Turkish migrants as being stuck "between-two-worlds", Germany and Turkey. Moreover, the participants have also moved beyond the frameworks of an elusive "homeland" and "host country" and expanded to multiple trans-local activities interconnected with other urban minority groups under QPoC in Berlin.

## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. How would you describe your life in Turkey?
3. How did you move to Berlin?
4. How is your everyday life Berlin?
5. What are your experiences in LGBTQ places in Berlin? Which places do you prefer to visit?
6. Have you ever been in any LGBTQ demonstrations in Berlin? If so, what are your impressions?
7. Have you ever been in any LGBTQ clubs, bars, meetings, community groups in Berlin? If so, what are your impressions?
8. Have you ever encountered any behavior or treatment that you considered as discriminatory? If so, what are your impressions?
9. Are you often asked to explain your country of origin or your racial/ethnic background? If so, what is your experiences?
10. How would you identity yourself in racial and ethnic categories? Where does your country of origin stands in the way you define your identity in Berlin?
11. Have you ever been in venues, places, events that are promoted for QPoC? What is your experience with QPoC places and communities in Berlin? What are your impressions?
12. What were some of the topics that you discussed in QPoC places? Would you reflect on the political subjects and explain your familiarity with the topics?

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