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Open Essays and Researches

Academic Nomads. The Changing Conception of Academic Work under Precarious Conditions

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Abstract. In addition to the economic destabilization of academic labour markets in neoliberal times, intellectual labour also experiences ideologically motivated repressions in a number of countries. One of the most recent examples of the latter has been the AKP government's attack on dissident scholars, which started following the Academics for Peace Petition in January 2016 and escalated in the aftermath of the alleged coup attempt in July 2016. As a result, over the course of the past two years, a growing number of the signatories of the Peace Petition have been forced to leave Turkey to escape imprisonment and/or unemployment. In most cases, the emigrated academics are offered short-term scholarships contingent upon political risk factor which help them avoid immediate threats from the Turkish government for the time being. However, without a future prospect for a steady position and/or a settled life on the horizon, they are faced with the existential precariousness of a forced nomadic way of living. Against the backdrop of the occupational dismantling and geographic uprooting that the exiled Peace Academics are experiencing, this study seeks to explore the challenges but also the possibilities that this severe precarity bears for a new form of intellectual subjectivity. The main question of this paper is how the confrontation with existential insecurity transforms the way the academics perceive their profession and whether this experience might lead to a wider questioning of the institutional academia in general. For this purpose, it attempts to map out the shared expressions of insecurity, disillusionment, and hope, drawing on in-depth interviews with the signatories of Academics for Peace Petition in German exile.

Keywords. Academics for Peace; exile; precarization; precariousness; academic labour; subjectivity.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the growing economic precarization of academic labour force in neoliberal times (Berry 2005; Donoghue 2008; Ehrenberg 2002; Gee 2017; Gill 2009; Lawrence and Sharma 2002; Lessinger and Wojcicka Sharff

1994; Maisto *et alii* 2013; Moore *et alii* 2010; Neill 2008; Rhoades 2013; Whelan 2015), in a number of countries such as Turkey, China, Iran, Russia and alike, intellectual labour is experiencing ideologically motivated repressions buttressed by neo-conservative attacks on scientific freedoms¹. Over the course of the last few years, an increasing number of academic workers from various countries have been forcibly displaced. The rocketing number of the Academics for Peace from Turkey in European exile is one of the most recent examples of this forced academic migration trend².

Since January 2016, the universities in Turkey have been purged of dissident scholars. Within roughly 1.5 years, 460 Peace Academics have been condemned to unemployment through forced retirement, dismissal, suspension and/or per statutory decree³. The ones who were able to leave the country before their passports got revoked per decree were compelled to emigrate in order to continue academic work. Currently, most of them are struggling to find ways of making a living on temporary scholarships and with invalid passports. For the most part, the exiled academics' experiences are discussed from a humanitarian point of view and with a particular focus on political risk. However, reducing the problem of forced academic migration to a human rights issue poses two limitations on the social scientific discourse. First, by concentrating solely on the aspect of political oppression that the displaced academics have been exposed to in their home countries, it overlooks the aspect of economic precarization to which they are still subjected in the international academic labour markets. Second, by victimizing the exiled intellectuals it fails to notice that a confrontation with such a structural impasse can also bear the potential to change the conventional view on academic production relations. Instead, this study focuses on the current form of precariousness that the academics are faced with due to occupational dismantling and forced nomadism in exile. It deals with the question of how their conception of academic work as a profession is being transformed under the impact of severe occupational and existential precarity. By doing so, it aims to explore the possibility for a new form of intellectual subjectivity outside of the institutional academia.

The view on precariousness as a possible source of subjectivation, which is at the heart of this study, is inspired by the Spinozian anthropology of emotions/affects to a great extent⁴. Especially salient in this regard is Rosi Braidotti's Spinozist approach on social exclusion as an opportunity for a new, pluralistic and substantially inclusivistic subjectivity (Braidotti 2008; Braidotti 1996)⁵. Judith Butler's thoughts on the unifying and reviving power of vulnerability and mourning (Butler 2004), and Isabell Lorey's view on the shared experience of precariousness as a source subjectivation (Lorey 2015) are also significant attempts in this direction⁶. Following from these approaches,

¹ According to the Scholars at Risk Network's *Summary Report on Activities 2016-2017*, applications by threatened scholars for urgent assistance have increased by 400 percent compared to the previous 5 years (SAR 2017a). The *2017 Free to Think Report* of SAR (2017b) documents and analyses 257 reported attacks on higher education communities in 35 countries between September 2016 and August 2017.

² It is estimated that the number of academics from Turkey seeking refuge in Germany alone reached approximately 100-150 (Sezer-Bilen and Topçu-Erdoğan 2016), although not all of them belong to the Academics for Peace group.

³ The record of rights violations against the signatories of the Academics for Peace Petition is being kept and regularly updated in the internal database of the Academics for Peace: <https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/node/314>.

⁴ In recent times, there has been a revival of Spinozian approaches with regard to the question of subjectivity. For a recount of capital-labour relations from a Spinozian perspective, see Lordon (2013). Frédéric Lordon focuses on the process of the seemingly voluntary alignment of labour to the interests of capital and holds that, in post-industrial times, the organization of an anti-capitalistic resistance requires more than a self-evident call on class consciousness. For another work sustaining a Spinozian holism against dualistic approaches which write off the role of corporeality in the question of subjectivation, see Fox (2015).

⁵ In Spinoza's thought, *conatus* is the basis of all "free action" in the sense of "[endeavouring] to persist in its own being" and "resistance to destruction" (Ethics, Part III, Prop. VI). For Spinoza, physical existence and the desire and actions geared toward the preservation of it (*i.e.*, the body and the mind) cannot be separated or set against each other. Considering that the universe and the living beings in it are preconditioned to sustain their existence, there can be no discrepancy between the universal rationality and the actions of each being aiming at self-preservation. Neither the natural and the rational can be conceived separately, nor can there be any contradiction between *desire* and the *knowledge of desire* in the sense of an irreconcilable antagonism of "emotions vs. reason": "Will and understanding are one and the same" (Ethics, Part II, Prop. XLIX). Thus, the neo-Spinozian subjectivity theories perceive *conatus* as the primary source and starting point of existence as well as of all rational, affectional, physical and intellectual actions that strive to preserve one's own being (Braidotti 2008).

⁶ Stephen David Ross' idea that there can arise a new ethics out of the memory of disaster, can also be mentioned in this context

the study at hand analyses the precarious and nomadic mode of existence of the exiled Peace Academics as a window of opportunity for an alternative mode of intellectual production, rather than an absolute state of precarity or a historical tragedy. Consequently, specific attention is paid to the shared expressions of insecurity and vulnerability as well as to subjectivation under precarious conditions.

The outline of the article follows the recurrent themes in the interviewees' own narratives regarding their precarious state and their changing views on academic work. Thus, it starts with their perception of precariousness that, according to the majority of the interviewees, manifests itself as a feeling similar to living in a "purgatory". Then it proceeds with their disillusionment regarding the institutional academia. The article concludes with the exiled academics' views on how to transform the existing academic production relations in such a way as to create a more egalitarian space for critical thinking and knowledge production.

METHODOLOGY

The process which the exiled Peace Academics are currently undergoing is a specific moment in the precarization of academic labour force. This study understands itself as a snapshot of this specific moment within an ongoing process and attempts to evaluate the historical chances and challenges it bears. The article is based on an empirical study conducted with the signatories in German exile, by an exiled signatory herself who got banned from public service and whose passport got revoked per Statutory Decree No. 686, on February 7, 2017.

Germany is chosen as the main field of research for two reasons: firstly, on quantitative grounds, since the majority of the displaced Academics for Peace happen to be in Germany – due to the German academia's intense involvement with the happenings in Turkey and the plethora of scholarship opportunities offered by German foundations. The second reason, probably related to the first one, is that the politically and publicly most active branch of Academics for Peace abroad happens to be located in Germany.

The interviewee profile was selected using homogeneous purposive sampling method with special regard to the forced aspect of emigration: the sample group consists of only those signatories who cannot return to Turkey either because their passports would be confiscated and/or they would be arrested/condemned to imprisonment upon their return. Considering the fact that being in "exile" connotes some sort of punitive exclusion, the signatories who decided to remain abroad on their own personal choosing or on some seemingly more advantageous career considerations are excluded.

As processes of precarization and subjectivation consist of highly personal experiences, their understanding requires an exploration of the maps of meaning that are shaped by collective memories as well as personal narratives. For that reason, the research methods considered to be most suitable in this study are participatory observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews⁷. Additionally, a focus group meeting of approximately 2,5 hours was

(Ross 2005). Carole Leathwood's assumption that the enormous corpus of students, which constitute a more diverse and precarious mass than ever, could provide a vantage point for the imagination of a new mode of intellectual subjectivation, transcending the conventional categories of sex, race, and class within the institutional academia, is a similar approach that discusses the topic with respect to intellectual subjectivity (Leathwood 2010).

⁷ The in-depth interviews were conducted between 24 June - 11 August 2017. The interviewees consisted of 7 female and 4 male academics (1 PhD student, 8 assistant professors, 1 associate professor, and 1 professor) between the ages of 32 and 49. 10 of the interviewees are "decreed", while the one "non-decreed" interviewee has a pending criminal investigation on suspicion of "making terrorist propaganda" along with his three other colleagues, one of whom has additionally been "decreed" while in Germany and was interviewed for this project. Another interviewee had to resort to "illegal" means in order to flee Turkey and emigrate to Germany, because the local court had imposed a travel ban on her in January 2016. She was recently granted refugee status by the time of the interview. In accordance with the research focus of this study, only the sex, age, legal status (decreed/pending trial/refugee), and the duration of the remaining scholarship of the interviewees will be shared with the readers. Except the names of the scholarship granting institutions/foundations, all personal and institutional information will be kept confidential. Further, the notes from the focus group meeting will not be recited in this article, since it is not possible to make use of the complete body of data here because of space limitations.

held with 7 participants in order to map out the shared experiences of being a “decreed” academic abroad. The interview questions were developed with the aim of finding out basically three things: (1) the way the interviewees perceive their current conditions, (2) the shared aspects of these conditions, and (3) the way their views on institutional academia have changed as a result of the occupational dismantling they are going through.

The individual interviews as well as the focus group meeting were intended to be the first step towards creating a new form of intellectual subjectivity in alternative to the existing institutional academia by doing. In this respect, the study at hand is rather tailored as a sort of “prefigurative action” towards the construction of a new view on academic work than a mere collection of personal accounts of exile⁸. As a matter of fact, the focus group meeting also entailed long and detailed methodological discussions about how to conduct such a study, in which the researcher herself is a part of the shared experience and which is done under extraordinary conditions that gravely deviate from our accustomed living and research environments.

Clearly, both the logistic shortages bound with living in exile and the personal and emotional involvement of the researcher with the object of study required a new approach to knowledge production outside of the conventional methodology. While completely aware of the risks of such an enterprise, the researcher holds that especially in such extraordinary times, the self-reflexive gaze of participants of a certain process is a source of knowledge too valuable to dispense with - all the more so if this certain group has the necessary intellectual, methodological, and theoretical tools at their disposal to analyse the current historical reality that surrounds them. Therefore, the present study is based on the methodological consideration that such a specific frame of moment cannot be snapshot through one-sided passive interviews, but only by *co-thinking*. It is plain that this kind of knowledge cannot be produced along the conventional and mechanic dichotomy of “researcher (subject) vs. interviewee (object)”. Thus, in addition to the researcher being a part of the shared experience that she wishes to depict, the interviewees made considerable contributions to the study as well, from the methodology to the formulation of research questions. In that sense, the methodology at hand represents an attempt to re-think the way of conducting social research in changing times, while the project itself reflects the logic of solidarity with regard to the conditions under which it was conducted⁹.

LIVING IN THE “PURGATORY”

Nine out of eleven interviewees described being a decreed academic abroad as living in the “purgatory”. Although a vague and highly subjective emotional state at first sight, it is possible to discern some distinctive social traits of this feeling of “being stuck in between”. As it transpired in the course of the interviews, this seemingly subjective/emotional vocabulary is actually the expression of a shared structural position of precarity. In view of the interviewees’ detailed descriptions, it is possible to distinguish four different yet mutually reinforcing levels of uncertainty, embodied in the concept of purgatory.

a) Being torn between different spheres of responsibility: The never ending duties of an unsettled life

The first level of uncertainty is reflected in the individual’s *dividedness between different spheres of responsibility*. What is meant by that is being torn between the necessity of rebuilding the daily life in a foreign country and the

⁸ “Prefigurative action” is used here in the sense of a form of social movement that brings about social change by realizing it within the action itself. For a detailed explanation, see Kaldor and Selchow (2012).

⁹ This study was not financed by any institution, neither did the researcher receive a regular, permanent scholarship by the time the empirical part was conducted. Therefore, it should be emphasized, that the interviewees, most of whom were living in other cities, came to Berlin to give interviews and to take part in the focus group meeting on their own means. In this respect, this project truly represents a collective outcome of collegial solidarity, whereas the researcher only deserves the credit of putting it into writing. Nevertheless, the ideas and conclusions drawn from the interviews belong for the most part to the researcher herself. The participants of the study cannot be held responsible for any discussions that may arise from these conclusions in any way.

responsibilities tied with being a politically active academic in exile. All the interviewees expressed their *mêlée* that comes from their constant inner struggle of having to settle in, on the one hand, and to perform their duties to the peace movement in Turkey, on the other. The realization of the academic/intellectual responsibilities required to maintain a career within the highly competitive academic labour market often seems to clash with those two other areas of responsibility.

In exile, not only the basic infrastructure of everyday living needs to be rebuilt, but also the hitherto obtained occupational skills and seniority shrink to a nullity for the most part. Moreover, the impression that one is not valued for her/his actual academic qualities, but rather pitied for being a “scholar at risk” is a degrading feeling for most of the academics. Interviewee 10 (f, 48, SD, scholarship due end of December 2017) conveyed this experience that devaluated her qualifications as a professor as follows:

The first days were horrible. A psychological purgatory, being not able to move... And an incredibly intensive effort to reorganize the daily life; I've never seen something like this. [...] There is no break. It is a problem to find an apartment, the flat is empty, you have to find furniture, you have to get health insurance, go to the police for visa application. And beside all this, you have to constantly fill out application forms in order to secure your next position. And in addition to that, the university... I realized I've met 15 different persons, and every time you meet another person, they're like “so, what can we do for you? Tell us about yourself”! I am not a 20-year old anymore, and yet I have to explain myself to people over and over again! [...] I've been working [my whole life], and yet here you have to explain yourself over and over again, [...] like “I am a hardworking person, attached you may find my CV”.

In addition to that, the fact that there can be no clarity yet as to whether they can continue to stay and bring their families there poses an obstacle to long-term academic/intellectual commitment. Interviewee 3 (m, 44, TMK 7/2, 6-months RLF scholarship) who initially came to Germany on a 6-months scholarship explained that he spent these 6 months searching for long-term scholarship opportunities, on the one hand, and for ways of bringing his wife and his son to Germany, on the other. «This [uncertainty]», he said, «is something terribly counterproductive for academic engagement». Finding himself constantly compelled to save the day by short-term scholarships poses an obstacle to come up with ideas for long-term projects, according to him. Apparently, lacking a steady position and not being able to settle in hinders the academics from conducting high quality research, while, in turn, falling short of the expectations of the academic job market regarding research activities makes it impossible to find and secure a stable position within the academic institutions. In this sense, Interviewee 3 describes the situation of the forcibly nomadic academics as a «constant impasse».

This impasse is surely fomented by the structural bottleneck of the global academic job markets. In a cut-throat academic labour market that has already reached capacity and cannot absorb the existing labour supply even at times of relative stability, the academic qualifications of the forcibly displaced academics are often being deliberately overshadowed by the label of “scholar at risk”. The exiled academics are reminded in various ways that they are being hosted as guests, only for the time being and as a gesture of collegial solidarity, no matter what their academic qualifications are. At this point, a strong academic *résumé* and seniority do not seem to provide an advantage, either. In fact, the experiences of Interviewee 10 (f, 48, SD, scholarship due end of December 2017) are a case in point:

It is a disadvantage to be a professor, a senior scholar. [...] I came here informally, without anything. I am embarrassed to tell, but a friend of mine mediated, and the colleagues here handed me money from the emergency fund of the rectorate, in an envelope. [...] I sent my CV, they liked it, and there I was. I lived on that money in the envelope for 3 months. When I said “Thank you for helping me get here, but I feel so insecure like this; I need a longer term opportunity in order to focus”, a German colleague answered in a visibly angry manner: “We can't even find positions for natives with a German degree, are we supposed to invent one for you?”

The aforementioned lack of ability to focus and work productively is surely aggravated by the psychological-emotional baggage that the interviewees brought along abroad. The «constant impasse» that Interviewee 3 talked about is not only caused by a technical dilemma between everyday pragmatism and the long-term goals, but actually by an increasingly permanent existential crisis of meaning regarding the academic profession. The fact that a similar problem of being not able to focus on work can be observed by interviewees with relatively long-term scholarships as well confirms this argument:

It is utterly difficult to concentrate on work with my current state of mind; I am having a hard time to pursue my project, which puts me even more under pressure because I cannot work properly. [...] On the one hand, you have to keep working. On the other hand, you have to preserve your psychological balance – I mean, the balance you don't have anymore, actually -, and meanwhile, on another level, it all looks so pointless. You are 36 years old, *everything you ever worked for fell apart; under these circumstances some things lose their meaning anyway*. (Interviewee 4, f, 36, SD, PSI)

Having lost the capacity to decide over one's own life and being condemned to drift along on the good will of external factors deepens this crisis of meaning. For example, Interviewee 7 (f, 39, SD, contract researcher until December 2017) explained that she was able to find a way to cope with the fact of not having a settled life for a long time, and yet she felt «aimless». Apparently, along with a prospect for a settled life, not only a regular home life, but also lived experiences, accumulated memories, and finally, the promise of future prospects that this ordinary living used to entail disappear as well. Unfortunately, for this reason, «when the past disappears, meaning is erased» (Augé 2014: 16).

b) Spatial dividedness: A non-place between Turkey and Europe

A second dimension of the purgatory is *spatial*. The participants articulated in different ways their dividedness between Turkey, with which they cannot and do not want to break ties completely, and Europe, where they cannot seem to settle in properly for varying reasons. Here, in addition to the structural rigidity of the global academic labour markets, being caught emotionally off-guard by a forced farewell also plays a significant role. In fact, all the interviewees had initially come for a temporary stay, and none of them had prepared themselves for an ultimate goodbye – neither emotionally, nor logistically. The following words of Interviewee 2 (female, 46, TMK 7/2, Philipp-Schwartz-Initiative scholarship for 2 years¹⁰), expressing her undecidedness between going back to Turkey and staying in Germany, reflect the emotional and psychological violence of being caught off-guard: «*I am on hold* [at the moment]... Yes, *I am on hold*». There can be no guarantee of finding another scholarship, let alone a permanent position, in the receiving country. Thus, even if the academics in exile would be willing to accept never to return to Turkey, this individual decision would require them to accept not being able to settle in anywhere and to be prepared to lead a nomadic mode of living for the next couple of years to come. This means an indefinite prolongation of the “purgatory” phase, and a suspension of every kind of personal, political, and intellectual plan.

All the interviewees emphasized that they did not have any desire to go abroad prior to the encounter with the risk of unemployment and travel ban. However, after the alleged coup attempt on July, 15, they decided to go abroad in order to make a living “at least for a little while”¹¹. Most of them started to consider a longer stay after being decreed in absentia. Interviewee 6 (f, 46, SD, guest lecturer at 3 different universities) stated that she wouldn't mind the travel ban and would actually be willing to return to Turkey, if she only had the possibility to work again there, and said that she «cannot continue to give lecture anymore, wandering around for another 30 years». Similarly, Interviewee 10 (f, 48, SD, scholarship due end of December 2017) said that she could imagine working at some university in Turkey at which she «wouldn't be sickened so much». She expressed the difficulty of asserting herself in a foreign academic environment as follows: «*There [in Turkey] I am someone*. I have a command of its social agenda. What can I do here, in a country where I don't even have command of the spoken language?».

¹⁰ From here onwards, following abbreviations will be used: *f* for female, *m* for male, *PSI* for stipendiaries of the Philipp-Schwartz-Initiative, *SD* (state decree) for the ones whose passports got cancelled per decree, *TMK 7/2* for the interviewees whose cases for criminal charge for terrorist propaganda are still pending. The interviewees will be mentioned by their respective numbers.

¹¹ This mindset seems to be remarkably consistent with the attitude to which Hannah Arendt referred to in her essay *We Refugees*, from 1943 (see the next part in this article for a relatively more detailed reference on Arendt's essay). Arendt explains in her essay how the German-Jewish intellectuals who were forced to emigrate during WWII refused to admit any exceptionality in their situation, and kept ascribing their decision to emigrate merely to economic reasons (Arendt 1943). This attitude seems to be a defence mechanism aimed at reducing the destructive effects of a historic turmoil on the individual's psychology by narrowing it down to an ordinary material factor.

Nevertheless, although it is hard to come to terms with a nomadic mode of living, in view of the real circumstances it seems even harder to imagine a settled life:

I don't know if I can settle in here. I don't know if I can settle in Turkey, either. *To be honest, I do not see myself anywhere anymore.* [...] I feel like years will go by like this. (Interviewee 7, f, 39, SD, contract-based researcher until end of December)

The responsibility felt toward the fellow-signatories in Turkey also foments this state of being torn between Turkey and the current residence:

The issues here seem to me of little significance *because my mind is still fully occupied with the happenings in Turkey*, but it shouldn't be this way. [...] As an academic I could take part in a lot of activities here that would enrich my intellectual horizon. However, my mind is so occupied and closed, I can't bring myself to focus on these activities here. (Interviewee 6, f, 46, SD, guest lecturer)

Should the necessity to stay here permanently arise, and also as a requirement of my scholarship, I should invest some thought and effort to my life here. This is one thing. The other thing is, that I actually want to go back and exist there [Turkey]. Because, actually, no matter what happens, I want to live and produce there. [...] Deep down, you are constantly confronted with this dilemma. [...] *It is like a constant inner struggle.* (Interviewee 1, f, 44, SD, PSI)

I did not make any long term plans. But I got decreed during this time. [...] This meant a serious limitation of my subsistence opportunities. So I stumbled badly. [...] *This thing that I call "stumbling" did not happen when I got fired from the university, or when I got arrested, but it happened after the decree...* A sort of despair, this actually never happened before, but it happened after the decree. (Interviewee 2, f, 46, SD, TMK /2, PSI)

All the interviewees confirmed that focusing solely on their individual lives in Germany unsettles them. At this point, being caught emotionally off guard for a new start in a foreign country plays just as significant a role as the responsibility felt for their fellow-signatories in Turkey. We can discern from their narratives that they only made a half-hearted decision without having the assurance of having full command of the future course of their lives. The reason for that lies in the fact that their real choices are still limited to "the plague or the cholera". Obviously, no decision to be taken under these circumstances can be capable of restoring the desire and will power of the individual.

c) *Temporal dividedness: A non-time between the past, the present, and the future*

Finding oneself compelled to maintain a living in a foreign country without having had the time and the chance for a proper farewell neither in the emotional nor in the practical sense, is also interrelated with the *temporal dimension* of the "purgatory". The narratives of the interviewees make the impression that they are suffering from an ambiguous time perception divided between the past, the present, and the future. The past has neither practically nor emotionally passed, but is rather left as an open bill in Turkey. The present seems to be passing away as a flow of everyday obligations of a new life that the individual cannot seem to truly attain. The future, on the other hand, looks like a dark tunnel full of new challenges, that one rather wishes to avoid thinking about. Under these circumstances, the time itself resembles a battlefield without the slightest possibility for a truce on the horizon.

As a matter of fact, almost all the interviewees described in various ways an incapability to arrive at the present. Most of them mentioned a certain discrepancy between the real time of their daily lives in Germany and their own time conception. For example, Interviewee 4 (f, 36, SD, PSI) expressed this discrepancy as follows: «I feel like I built *an artificial living* here». Another interviewee described a similar psychological state as «floating around within a chaos that [she] cannot master», and as «*living amid a roar*» where many things currently happening first occur to her afterwards instead of when they actually happen (Interviewee 6, f, 46, SD, guest lecturer).

Nevertheless, this ambiguous state of distractedness seems to serve as a way of coping with precariousness at times. In fact, Interviewee 1 (f, 44, SD, PSI) described uncertainty as the most challenging part of her current life and stated that it compels her to live on a narrow, daily agenda. However, according to her, living with a

short term agenda somehow provides a relief inasmuch as it distracts her from overthinking about a nevertheless ambiguous future:

I describe it as “walking in the fog”. [...] When you are walking amid fog-enshrouded hills, you don’t look far ahead, you concentrate on your toes, because if you lift your head up and look ahead, you can stumble on a hole in your way. [...] Short term mentality [...] is a terrible thing, but at the same time it is my survival strategy. [...] *You lost your connection to the past, there is nothing in the future, and you are stuck in an eternal present.* It is a real prison. [...] There is a certain hopelessness, *yet this fog metaphor gives me the strength to carry on with my daily life.*

At this point, uncertainty and insecurity are obviously being transformed into a survival strategy. The individual recognizes and accepts uncertainty in order to cope with the short term mentality imposed upon him/her by the circumstances, as in the sense that Isabell Lorey had put it (Lorey 2015). At first sight, this short-term pragmatic attitude seems to be part of an individual strategy of self-defence. The individual tends to watch his/her own life from afar, like an external fiction, in order to protect himself/herself until he/she manages to “get his/her act together”. This tendency resembles what Marc Augé calls a “*suspended time*” which we enter while watching a movie. According to Augé, the pleasure derived from watching a play or a movie emanates from the expectation that the plot is going to be resolved eventually. And this pleasure is linked with «a particular relation to time: the real time spent reading or watching the spectacle, and the fictional time of the plot itself» (Augé 2014: 5). Waiting for the plot to be resolved arouses excitement insofar as it allows to build a connection between the past where the things happened and the future where the mystery is going to be resolved (ibid.).

In times of crisis, the individual might tend to live his/her own life as in a similar ‘suspended’ time. By so doing, he/she seems to be exactly waiting for this relation to be restored and the plot to be resolved, and eventually, the pieces of his/her life to fall into place. Until this relation is restored, refusing to recognize the real time and to live it as in a movie, as in a fiction happening in another time, can be seen as an intuitional tactic to preserve the integrity of self. However, in order for a self-conscious anti-institutional intellectual subjectivity to arise out of this situation, one has to depart from individual and individualistic attempts to overcome uncertainty. At the end of the day, the precariousness which we find ourselves in and which imposes upon us this short term mentality is caused by structural conditions affecting a significant number of people simultaneously. Thus, putting our hopes on individual solutions can only result in the strengthening of the competitive market mechanisms, which fuelled this uncertainty in the first place. After all, «[t]he future, even when it concerns the individual, always has a social dimension: it depends on others» (ibid.: 2).

d) The difficulty of defining oneself: A non-position between exile and guesthood

Hannah Arendt begins her essay *We Refugees*, from 1943, which she wrote during the tumultuous days of WWII that turned all hitherto existing political and existential categories upside down, with the following words: «In the first place, we don’t like to be called “refugees”. We ourselves call each other “newcomers” or “immigrants”» (Arendt [1943], in Robinson *et al.* 1996: 110). She continues to explain how far away the emigrated intellectuals, who “voluntarily” moved abroad and had the chance to pick their destination themselves, saw themselves from the conventional definition of the term “refugee”. Arendt ascribes this persistent attempt at seeing themselves as “regular immigrants” and at convincing everyone else of it to a sort of optimism about their current situation. By doing so, the emigrated intellectuals were apparently trying to convince themselves that there was nothing extraordinary in their situation, and that they went abroad merely on economic grounds. As Arendt puts it, «[i]n order to rebuild one’s life one has to be strong and an optimist». The way to persevering one’s optimism clearly leads through unthinking one’s current situation, in order to stop comparing it with what one used to be in the past. Arendt’s painfully vivid essay depicts how rebuilding one’s life in a foreign country, in a foreign language and under precarious conditions requires a constant attempt to “forget”: not only the country left behind, the old personal habits and individual past, but also the conventional conceptions of a

settled life, of nomadism, of being a guest, and of being a refugee. In fact, Hannah Arendt herself admits a couple of sentences later:

A refugee used to be a person driven to seek refuge because of some act committed or some political opinion held. Well, it is true we have had to seek refuge; but we committed no acts and most of us never dreamt of having any radical opinion. With us the meaning of the term “refugee” has changed. (*ibid.*)

This kind of ambiguity manifests itself also in the way most of the Peace Academics abroad refuse to define their status via conventional labels. They abstain from describing their current status as “exile”, because they did not go through conviction procedures similar to previous historical examples of exile, or they did not experience any “escape scenes” associated with political fugitives. At this point, the comparison to other refugees or to people who had to experience forced emigration and/or exile also seems to add to the burden of conscience, which withholds the exiled academics from making any comments that might somehow invoke the impression that they are complaining about their situation, or trying to attract pity. Interviewee 1 (f, 44, SD, PSI) defines herself as a «privileged exiled person», because objectively she does not live under bad conditions and she has a research scholarship. Even though the state decree doubled her sense of being abroad «*despite her own will*», she finds a way of relativizing her situation in view of past examples: «But our situation here is not even slightly comparable to what the refugees in the past had to endure. They have been through terrible things. [...] We’re good». Similarly, Interviewee 6 (f, 46, SD, guest lecturer) views her being able to pursue her vocation as an academic as «*a tremendous luck for someone in exile*».

However, most of the interviewees are reluctant to accept their status as a “guest researcher” which would apply to them under “normal” circumstances, because being abroad in their case does not seem to be a wilful act. Interviewee 3 (m, 44, TMK 7/2, 6 months RLF scholarship) points out to this ambiguity when saying he is «*something in between a guest and an exiled person*». From a purely legal point of view, he is able to go back to Turkey, as long as his legal case is not finalized and his prison sentence is not affirmed. Yet, since he can be sentenced or decreed anytime, he describes his situation as «in between exile and visit, in a *purgatory*».

By other interviewees, however, who have been subjected to a statutory decree and whose passports got revoked, the sense of being in exile prevails. For example, Interviewee 10 (f, 48, SD, scholarship due end of December 2017) stated that she is «not a guest, rather an exiled person». Similarly, Interviewee 6 (f, 46, SD, guest lecturer) holds that, despite her official status as a guest lecturer, she does not really feel like one: «Because *a guest can go back home anytime, I can’t*». Interviewee 11 (m, 40, SD, PSI) defines himself as «half exile, half nomad». He admits that he only says «half» as a gesture of wishful thinking in order not to lose all hope, although he actually thinks that it is pretty plain that the actual situation rather equals exile.

Interviewee 7 (f, 39, SD, research contract until end of December 2017) realized during the interview that she has never reflected on her current situation, and expressed her undecidedness on that subject matter as follows:

I cannot bring myself to define myself as exiled, but I guess we are in exile. I mean, since we cannot go back, right? But I guess I have problem with admitting it. It was something that I read in books about, never thought it could happen to me, but apparently it could. I guess we are in exile.

Interviewee 8 (m, 49, SD, PSI), on the other hand, is more clearly cognizant of the fact that he is being dragged into a situation against his own will:

I do define myself as an exiled person, because *it is not something that I am doing voluntarily*. Well, I can be in Turkey right now and there is no confirmed charges against me at the moment yet, [...] but I am unemployed to start with, I will have problems making a living and I will not be able to pursue any academic activities under those circumstances whatsoever, I will not be able to perform my job. Thus, *it is actually exile*.

He also underlines that it was the state decree which increased his sense of being in exile:

Before the decree, I had the assurance that I could go back whenever I wanted to, but after the passports got cancelled per decree, the feeling of being in exile started to outweigh, because I can't go back home anymore.

It becomes clear, that the individual tends to relativize the historical gravity of the ongoing situation in order to survive in the first place. Yet, when the going gets rough and the individual will is being trampled down more harshly, as it has been the case for the decreed academics abroad, this effort to remain optimistic gradually vanishes. The more the individual will is being eroded by external circumstances, the only rational way out that remains seems to be to decide how to name the current situation, and to think of possible collective solutions along common denominators.

OCCUPATIONAL DISILLUSIONMENT AND THE NEED FOR A NEW FORM OF INTELLECTUAL SUBJECTIVITY

Drawing on the idea of vulnerability as a common trait of all living beings, Rosi Braidotti holds that a collective experience of vulnerability can potentially lead to «a renewed sense of inter-connectedness». Therefore, the «force of the negative» should not be underestimated in the subjectivation process (Braidotti 2008). The *We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime* declaration itself can be viewed as a reflection of such a perception of “collective vulnerability”. The current situation which the decreed Peace Academics find themselves in is the outcome of their collective reaction to the state violence aimed at exploiting this vulnerability of human life. Obviously, the decision to sign the petition was motivated by deep anger and pain caused by bearing witness to the exploitation of vulnerability. The frustration with the systematic and deliberate reticence of the Turkish academia about the state's crimes as well as the exploitative working conditions at the universities played a major role in the last instance. As a matter of fact, the “need for an outcry”, “despair”, “long-term discontent”, and a “sense of urgency” came up in all the interviewees' narratives as a constantly recurring theme.

Most of the interviewees had already been suffering from a general dissatisfaction regarding the academic career before the petition crisis broke out:

We always had a problem with the existing academia in Turkey. Even when we were in it, we were oppositionists. It is something like this: You work within the scope of prescribed duties within a given structure, you sell your labour power and your knowledge in order to make a living. [...] But actually, we always had a problem with the existing academia. (Interviewee 2, f, 46, SD, TMK 7/2, PSI)

This general discontent became a permanent aversion after witnessing the rights violations following the petition. Interviewee 9 (m, 32, SD, PhD student), who is yet a career-early scholar, stated that he decided to resign right after the petition crisis broke out, because he already had «a quite problematic time as a research fellow» at the state university he used to work at. The Academics For Peace crisis only served as a litmus test and as a last drop in a series of unlawful acts on the part of the university administration. Thus, Interviewee 9 did not hesitate for a second to resign as soon as the head of his thesis committee told him that «[his] academic career is now over» for having signed the Peace Petition.

Some other interviewees expressed similar feelings:

I don't want to have to go back to the academia. I don't want to set foot on the WYZ University. *But I don't want to be a part of any academic institution anymore, either.* [...] (Interviewee 1, f, 44, SD, PSI)

I don't think there is an academia to which I could return anyway. *I don't want to go back.* [...] [The excitement she feels for her research area] cannot be taken away from me anyway. *But I cannot think of academic work to be sustained institutionally.* (Interviewee 2, f, 46, SD, TMK 7/2, PSI)

During the Academics For Peace process we witnessed such political frailty [within the academia], that it is safe to say that the aca-

demia in Turkey is nothing more than an absolute sinkhole. [...] *All the universities are a party to the crime. Therefore, I would never go back [to the universities].* (Interviewee 3, m, 44, TMK 7/2, 6-months RLF scholarship)

I did not feel alive there, anyway. After this incident, I never thought of continuing to work there. Even if some things should change [in Turkey], *I never want to go back and start working at those universities again.* [...]. (Interviewee 4, f, 36, SD, PSI)

However, since the wish to escape from the boundaries of institutional academia could not be backed by an alternative and sustainable mode of intellectual production yet, most of them find themselves still compelled to find work within the existing academic institutions. Interviewee 11 (m, 40, SD, PSI) says that the need for a job may drag him back to the universities in Turkey someday, yet he will not be able to build a close social and emotional relationship to the campus anymore like he used to: «*We are all upset with the university, to start with. I don't think that we will ever be able to feel a part of it again*».

All of the interviewees stated that the ongoing crisis has to do with the structural predicament of the global academia as much as it has a Turkey-specific dimension. Some tend to see in the global structural crisis of the academic labour market a favourable conjuncture for creating alternatives to the existing academic institutions, although they think that it has to start with local formations. Interviewee 3 (m, 44, TMK 7/2, 6-months RLF scholarship) pointed out to a need for «a radical questioning» within the academia, considering the fact that «the conditions of employment are terrible, and knowledge production itself is problematic» at the moment. According to him, the exiled Peace Academics lack the necessary tools for becoming the lead in such a movement, and it needs to be initiated by the “local” academics who possess a steady position and have access to decision making mechanisms.

As to the method of creating a new form of intellectual subjectivity outside of the institutional academia, the idea of partial resistance prevails. The general tendency to create fragmented and widespread micro organizations against a multi-centred systemic power seems to be taken up not only by the social movements of our time but also to be adopted in the sphere of intellectual subjectivity and resistance. Accordingly, building networks of solidarity based on shared precarity and vulnerability is a method of resistance embraced by the majority of the interviewees. Almost every interviewee emphasized the high importance of solidarity against deprivation and uncertainty. Interviewee 6 (f, 46, SD, guest lecturer at 3 different universities) says that she «came to see in the past 1,5 years that *solidarity is the most powerful weapon against fascism*, even when it's organized partially, [since] we clearly fail at organizing macro forms of resistance in the face of such a huge mechanism of oppression». Thus, «it is of utmost importance to create *small sites of resistance at every possible venue*».

In this regard, several interviewees find a new hope in the Solidarity Academies in Turkey, which are founded in various cities by dismissed Peace Academics¹²:

I see [the nucleus for an alternative academia in the Solidarity Academies]. [...] The rulership has an asymmetric power anyway; you are tiny against such a huge power. [...] Every attempt on your part to create something new seems miniature compared to that huge bloc. But you can think of it as *re-planting a seed in another place when the [academia] has kicked you out anyway*. For now, it may look small, it may seem like it doesn't stand a chance, but it gives me hope. (Interviewee 2, f, 46, SD, TMK 7/2, PSI)

Interviewee 3 (m, 44, TMK 7/2, 6-months RLF scholarship) holds that a radical questioning of the academic structures on a global scale requires «networks with much greater scope», yet the local Academies of Solidarity in Turkey may provide a nucleus for such an endeavour. Whether these initiatives will prove themselves to be capable of reaching anything depends on the strengthening of their financial infrastructures. According to Interviewee 3, the main task is to create «*egalitarian and emancipatory higher education institutions critical of the conventional*

¹² The Solidarity Academies aim at creating an alternative politico-cultural space outside of the campuses. The first steps of the Solidarity Academies were taken by the solidarity classes in a city in North-western Turkey, followed by the NO-Campus Academics in İstanbul. Currently they continue their activities in 10 different cities. There is an overarching coordination platform, yet each Solidarity Academy is autonomous. The lectures are given and attended on voluntary basis, and held either in public spaces such as parks and streets, or, in some cases, in the facilities of the trade union for educational workers. For more information, see: <https://www.dayanismaakademileri.org/>.

mode of knowledge production, where alternative research can be conducted». Considering the high degree of risk in Turkey, such an initiative should be constructed as «a network with branches in different regions, capable of shifting its geographical focus at certain times». But in order for such an initiative to be started, there has to be «a devoted group of people», and if the Academics For Peace succeeds in becoming a global movement rather than a Turkish one, it might provide a starting point for this type of network¹³.

The critical point here seems to be to overcome the conventional schemes regarding academic work. The first step in this direction would be to accept the fact that the picture of academia we had in mind at the beginning of our careers corresponds to neither past nor current reality. Moreover, this pre-conditioning itself seems to cause an obstacle to creating an alternative form of intellectual subjectivity at times. In a less trivial sense, being an intellectual in the truest sense of the term involves a state of constant nomadism between times, places, and ideas. It entails a certain deterritorialization due to the recognition of the multiplicity of the human condition. From this point of view, the institutional structures of knowledge production have a delimiting impact on intellectual nomadism and a conforming effect on the intellect along with the material conditions of living.

It is, of course, not to say that freedom and basic security are contradictory to each other. On the contrary, unless the minimum conditions of subsistence are secured, intellectual production is hard to sustain. However, viewing the institutional structures as the only means for knowledge production turns them into an end in themselves and renders the individual dependent. In this case, we often tend to become complicit and to strike a Faustian bargain in order to survive. What often eludes observation is that the system that we are living in and its institutions are not sustainable. Moments of crisis, as the one we are going through now, remind us of this simple truth. What needs to be done at times like these is to proclaim this truth through our own individual choices and to consciously refuse to comply with these unsustainable professional structures. At the end of the day, as in the words of one of the interviewees, «every experience we undergo inflicts new wounds on us, but it also opens up new ways» (Interviewee 5, f, 42, official refugee, PSI).

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¹³ In this respect, Interviewee 3 puts more hope to the France branch of Academics For Peace, since the Peace Academics in France seem to him to be more integrated in the French academia than their counterparts in Germany could yet manage to.

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