

Collective resilience and resistance in hybrid times: gender struggles in Germany, Turkey and Sweden

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ABSTRACT

In activist circles, the concept of resilience seems to have captured the spotlight once enjoyed by resistance. Instead of treating resilience as antithetical to resistance, and a discursive neoliberal vehicle that seeks individual solutions to collective problems, this article demonstrates its relationality to resistance in the context of online/offline struggles of feminist and LGBTI+ activists challenged by mobilizations against gender and sexual rights. Reflecting on the discussions and outputs of a series of digital workshops involving activists from Germany, Turkey and Sweden, the article investigates from a transnational perspective the meanings and aspects of collective resilience in the anti-gender context, and what resilience entails in the increasing online/offline hybridity of activism. Three themes emerge from this investigation: the connectedness of resistance and resilience across scale and context, the pronouncing of care and support networks as activist resources, and the emergence of the need and efforts to develop new alliances and solidarity structures in the face of the dual challenges of anti-gender mobilizations and neoliberalism. Resistance and resilience are intertwined in gender struggles taking place in the anti-gender context, in that the cultivation of resilience through care networks, the mobilization of positive affect, and the formation of dynamic and flexible solidarities enable and help sustain resistances in the online/offline interface. While online/offline hybridity offers opportunities to develop and sustain individual/collective resources, the article finds, attention should be paid to the processes of exclusion of underprivileged women and queer people in hybrid times.

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Introduction

Global environmental, social and health-related crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, underlies growing concerns for developing resilient spaces, communities and societies. There is also a recent upsurge of interest in activist resilience, as political and civic spaces are increasingly constricted due to the rise of authoritarianism, illiberalism, right-wing populism and anti-gender mobilizations (Zeller and Vidra 2021). While all four phenomena interact, the latter specifically impacts feminist and LGBTI+ activism, policy and research. In activist circles, the concept of resilience seems to have captured the spotlight once enjoyed by resistance. An increasing number of activist publications focusing on burnout, self-care and resilience-building suggest that a rethinking of the resistance-resilience relationship is a necessity emerging from new grassroots experiences (Wilfore 2022; FRIDA 2022). Building on approaches that address the relationality between resistance and resilience (Bourbeau and Ryan 2018), the situatedness of the resilient subject (Jenkins and Rondón 2015; MacLeavy, Fannin, and Lerner 2021) and the affective and collective dimensions of resilience (Mikecz 2021; Sharp and Nilan 2017), in this article, we explore feminist and LGBTI+ activism in Germany, Sweden and Turkey and demonstrate the intertwinement of resistance and resilience in gender struggles taking place in the anti-gender context. We argue that the cultivation of resilience through care networks, the mobilization of positive affect, and the formation of dynamic and flexible solidarities enable and help sustain resistances.

We define gender struggles as feminist and LGBTI+ activists' efforts to set agendas for and influence gender policies, and produce policy-relevant research while coping with the challenges posed by anti-gender mobilizations against gender equality and sexual rights. They include everyday struggles against structural inequalities as well as activist debates on gender and sexuality, including but not limited to the critique of the sex/gender binary. Diverging from the scholarship that presumes a dichotomy between resistance and resilience where the latter is associated with a neoliberal discourse of the individual singularly overcoming vulnerabilities (Jordan 2019; McRobbie 2020), in this article we show that activists are simultaneously challenged by the 'neoliberal co-optation of collective politics' (Baer 2016, 22) but also seek new ways to connect and sustain gender struggles through the cultivation of collective resilience necessitated by anti-gender pressures. As activism increasingly takes place in the 'interface between online and offline spaces' (Baer 2016, 22) that are crucial for feminist politics, the resistance-resilience intertwinement becomes more pronounced with the emergence of new needs and possibilities for gender struggles in this interface. We should note that in this article, our use of 'activists' includes activist-researchers as an expression of acknowledging the overlap between academic and activist knowledge

production, and we use the term 'queer' inclusively to characterize the struggles of LGBTI+ activists where '+' refers to the sexual and gender spectrum (see Çağatay, Liinason, and Sasunkevich 2022, 15–16).

Since the last decade, mobilizations against gender equality and sexual rights became visible as a transnational movement with fluid boundaries that unfold simultaneously across national and religious borders (Graff and Korolczuk 2022; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017; Roth, Scheele, and Winkel 2022; Zaremborg, Tabbush, and Friedman 2021). Referring to gender as a threat to the 'natural' family and heterosexuality, anti-gender mobilizations often entangle with extreme right, populist, and religious-conservative discourses on gender and sexuality (Dietze and Roth 2020). Hostility towards knowledge production on gender implies anti-gender actors' search for epistemic alongside political power (Paternotte and Verloo 2021). While existing research dwells on the rise of anti-gender mobilizations in national, regional and global contexts, there are only a handful of studies that focus on activist experiences, such as Krizsán and Roggeband (2021) exploration of feminist's changing engagements with the state in Central Eastern Europe and Cossutta and Habed (2021) study on the formation of intersectional, inclusive activist and academic networks in Italy. Given the affective stronghold of anti-gender mobilizations (Korolczuk 2021) and that 'the digital is not a separate sphere to non-digital spaces' (McLean, Maalsen, and Prebble 2019, 741), there is more need to piece out how activists resist and stay resilient in contexts of increasing burnout and growing reliance on online/offline hybridity.

Reflecting on the discussions and outputs of a series of digital workshops that took place in 2021 involving feminist and LGBTI+ activists from Germany, Turkey and Sweden, in this article, we investigate the meanings and aspects of collective resilience in the context of anti-gender mobilizations, and what resilience entails in an increasingly hybrid world of activism. Despite contextual differences regarding the trajectories of feminist and LGBTI+ activisms, attacks to gender equality and sexual rights exist in all three contexts (Arat 2022; Giritli Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018; Özkazanç 2020; Sager and Mulinari 2018; Villa 2017; Kováts and Pöim 2015). As anti-gender mobilizations present a threat to gender struggles in ways that crosscut discursive and geopolitical binaries such as East-West, North-South, secular-religious, and liberal-authoritarian, instead of a simple comparison of 'similarities' and 'differences' between national contexts, we employ a transnational perspective in discussing activist strategies and resilience in these different contexts (Çağatay, Liinason, and Sasunkevich 2022; Dufour, Masson, and Caouette 2010).

In the first section, we situate our approach to resilience as relational, affective, and collective in the current context of online/offline hybridity of activisms. Next section describes our research context and methodology and introduces #GenderStruggles project that informs this article. In what follows, we offer a discussion on resilience in relation to three themes: resistances,

sustainability, and solidarity. What emerges from this exploration is the connectedness of resistance and resilience across scale and context, increasing reliance on care and support networks, and the emergence of new alliances and solidarity structures in the face of the dual challenges of anti-gender mobilizations and neoliberalism. As individual and collective forms of resistance cohabit in entangled webs of online/offline activisms, the increasing reliance on hybridity presents unique challenges to the sustainability of resistance. In the anti-gender context, activists' experience of burnout renders collective resilience an important condition for sustainability, and networks of solidarity and care become significant elements of building collective resilience. Solidarity increasingly implicates the mobilization of positive affect in activism such as the enactment of happiness and joy, the formation of affective connections among activists and the development of alliances and coalitional politics. Yet, while online spaces offer new opportunities to develop and sustain individual and collective resources, unequal power relations privilege some groups in terms of their distribution. Since resilience can serve as a social relation that emerges in certain privileged social and economic systems (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013), attention should be paid to the processes of exclusion of underprivileged women and queer people in hybrid times.

Thinking beyond the resistance-resilience dichotomy

Developed within systems ecology in the 1970s and used vastly in social sciences (Walker and Cooper 2011); the applicability of the concept of resilience in feminist research is debated. The critical scholarship on resilience interprets it as a discursive vehicle of neoliberalism that puts the responsibility of collective problems on individuals' shoulders (Walker and Cooper 2011). An understanding of resilience as something that can be achieved through persistence and robustness resonates with neoliberal discourses of capitalism (Jordan 2019). Critical approaches perceive resilience as passive, depoliticizing and ultimately antithetical to resistance. For instance, McRobbie (2020, 42) argues that the emphasis on resilience in feminist popular culture depoliticizes feminism, moving it away 'from a resistance movement to something that can be not only accommodated, but also managed, controlled and then possessed as a source of ideas and innovation'. Turning feminism into an independence and self-care training for women, resilience becomes a remedy to dismantling welfare regimes in times of anxiety and uncertainty (Bracke 2016; McRobbie 2020).

In contrast to these perspectives, another line of view addresses the relationality between resistance and resilience (Bourbeau and Ryan 2018; Valenzuela, Sanfuentes, and Castillo 2023) as well as the embodied and affective characteristics of resilience (Valenzuela, Sanfuentes, and Castillo 2023).

Explaining civil resistance as a process marked by frequent disturbance and setbacks, Bourbeau and Ryan (2018, 228–229) argue that resistance requires resilience for its sustainability, and resilience keeps social justice struggles alive under extreme pressure when overt resistance is not possible and maintaining everyday life itself becomes a resistant act. For example, in reference to the struggles against mining corporations in the Andes, Jenkins and Rondón (2015) show how the concept of resilience resonates with women's daily routines and practices, enabling the recognition of their agency in everyday activism where spectacular struggles are not possible. For Buzzanell (2022, 45) as well, 'crafting normalcy' by behaving in ways that maintain familiar routines to fit changing circumstances is a component of communicatively constituted resilience for feminists, furthermore resilience can also be cultivated by backgrounding negative emotions and foregrounding positive action, using creativity and humour in activism and maintaining emotional support networks. In fact, emotions are shown to have a central role in cultivating resilience in illiberal contexts (Mikecz 2021). For instance, in mass demonstrations organized by LGBTI+ and allies in Poland, the participants' display of affective solidarity in hand holding and kissing, helped build protestor resilience by signalling 'normalcy' (Hrckova and Zeller 2021). Hence, the very characteristics that influence the interpretation of resilience as passivity for some, are interpreted by others as those that make it integral for resistance. Our contribution builds on this latter interpretation.

Context matters in addressing the resistance-resilience relationality as resilient subjects are situated and mutable due to social and geopolitical differences and intersecting inequalities (Jenkins and Rondón 2015; Jordan 2019; MacLeavy, Fannin, and Larner 2021). According to Bracke (2016, 65), for example, while the First World resilient subject denies dependency and vulnerability, the subaltern resilient subject of the global South keeps on wrestling with unbearable conditions and practises survival, and a third, postfeminist resilient subject 'continues to survive patriarchy, is increasingly exposed to the neoliberal conditions of flexicurity, and is considered individually responsible for her survival'. In this article, we argue that as similar attacks to feminist and LGBTI+ activism unfold in different geopolitical contexts, the dichotomy between 'apolitical First World' and 'revolutionary global South' resilient subjects becomes less relevant. Activism in the face of cross-border anti-gender mobilizations invites a rethinking of collective resilience to understand alternative political modes of resistance that are neither inside or outside power structures (MacLeavy, Fannin, and Larner 2021). Some of these modes require the formation of new alliances under precarious conditions, as in the case of solidarity between researchers and activists constrained by lack of institutional support and funding in Portugal (Ferreira 2019), or that of affective solidarities within and between feminist and queer communities (Korolczuk 2021; Sharp and Nilan 2017). As anti-gender

mobilizations and struggles against them take place in everyday life but are accentuated on social media (Ozduzen and Korkut 2020), online/offline hybridity becomes an important feature of these new activisms (e.g. Dahlberg-Grundberg 2016; Jurgenson 2011; Lindgren 2013).

Online and offline activism are not only reciprocal but also relational (Baer 2016; McLean, Maalsen, and Prebble 2019; Stewart and Schultze 2019). Given that 'the politics, structures and inequalities of the physical world are part of the very essence of the digital domain' (Jurgenson 2011), the ebbs and flows between online and offline spheres are not experienced to the same extent by all activists; 'emotional, mental or practical barriers which create different experiences, legitimate some feminist voices over others'. (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018, 237). Moreover, the development of new forms of resilience relevant to hybridity of activism is also context-bound. Social media helps mobilize offline protests, aid the construction of shared social identities, and embolden activists. Yet, especially in non-democratic political contexts, a liberatory technology can simultaneously be a repressive one as social media also enhances the visibility of activism thereby facilitating repression, surveillance and digilantism (Grijdanus et al. 2020). Activists' increasing reliance on online/offline hybridity provides new forms of connectivity and reconfigures the possibilities of political assemblage and solidarity (Cole and Atuk 2019), enabling the development of new forms of resilience and configurations of emotional interaction. In the following sections, we trace these configurations through the lens of social and global inequalities that taint the world of feminist and queer struggles in the anti-gender context.

#GenderStruggles: research context and methodology

The discussion in this article is based on eight digital workshops conducted in 2021 with thirteen activists as part of the project '#GenderStruggles: Building Community Resilience *via* Creativity and Digital Media' (Sabancı University Research Ethics Council Protocol Number FASS-2021-08). In #GenderStruggles we investigated feminist and queer responses to challenges to gender equality and sexual rights posed by anti-gender mobilizations in Germany, Turkey, and Sweden. As co-coordinators of the project, we explored whether and how feminist and queer responses converged and diverged based on activists' geopolitical location. The locations were selected based on accessibility to activist networks and familiarity with socio-political contexts as two of us were located in Germany, one in Sweden, and one in Turkey when designing the project. We moderated in a rotating order thematically organized workshops focusing on issues such as the sources and actors of anti-gender mobilizations, strategies of resistance, perils and pitfalls of digitalization, sustainability, solidarity, networking and outreach. Aside from discussions in plenary and breakout rooms, we employed creative

writing and group work techniques to facilitate deeper reflection on issues and experiences. The outputs of these sessions can be found on the project website which serves as a digital storyboard (www.genderstruggles.org). While the workshop themes were pre-determined by us, their structure and content were iteratively shaped and modified upon reflections on the previous workshop and participants' feedback. Importantly, while resistance was a predetermined theme, resilience emerged as a shared concern during the discussions.

The primary empirical-qualitative data we draw on is participants' interactive contribution to each workshop. It is classified both as personal opinions expressed in plenary sessions and summaries of group discussions in breakout rooms as reported by participants during the plenaries. The narratives include both the participants' own experiences and the collective experiences of the communities they belong to. Using software (MAXQDA) for qualitative data analysis, we analysed the transcripts of the recordings based on participants' consent. Throughout the article, pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of workshop participants. These pseudonyms were chosen in accordance with their personas and participants were informed that if they choose to display their real names on the project website, readers of academic publications who visit the website may be able to identify them. Deductive and inductive coding guided our interpretative and thematic analytical process (Braun and Clarke 2006). We prepared code structures based on the workshop themes and assigned sub-codes in accordance with further themes that emerged during workshop discussions.

When inviting activists to participate in the project, we sought to include an equal number of people from each national context and involve people from diverse backgrounds and locations. Out of the thirteen activists who participated in #GenderStruggles, four participants from Sweden came from four cities of different sizes, five participants from Germany were based in five cities across the country, and four participants from Turkey were based in two of Turkey's metropolises. Participants belonged to different age and occupational groups and had diverse gender identities, passports, and varying levels of digital literacy and English proficiency. Their selection was certainly influenced by our situatedness as researchers in our respective contexts. Like the spectrum of groups and issues targeted by anti-gender mobilizations, gender struggles are multifaceted and complex and cannot be fully grasped in a short-term, small-scale project like ours. Therefore, our aim in the project was and with this article is to provide a cross-section of different perspectives rather than a comprehensive representation of the experiences and situatedness of all groups targeted by anti-gender mobilizations. In the same vein, it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss how the differences between participants, their differential interaction with us as project coordinators, and the criteria to have English-speaking skills to participate in

the project have shaped the course of the project and thus the research findings we present here. Yet, we acknowledge them as important parameters that deserve attention and critical reflection in feminist research.

When analyzing our data, we refrained from a comparative approach that takes the nation-state as the main unit of analysis in understanding social and political processes (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This was because, first, the participants of the project did not claim to represent the nations they were based in and they did not necessarily see their struggles against anti-gender mobilizations through the lens of the nation-state. Second, by flattening and homogenising the diversity within the boundaries of nation-states, comparison of 'similarities' and 'differences' between national contexts alone runs the risk of reproducing discursive and geopolitical binaries such as East-West, North-South, secular-religious, and liberal-authoritarian. Instead, in this article, we embraced a transnational methodology that enabled an investigation of the flows, linkages, relationships and identities across multiple units and levels of analysis (Çağatay, Liinason, and Sasunkevich 2022; Dufour, Masson, and Caouette 2010). The online/offline hybridity approach also shaped our methodological and analytical processes to avoid reproducing dualistic discursive practices. At the same time, both anti-gender mobilizations and activist responses to them showed heterogeneous patterns in Germany, Sweden and Turkey. As anti-gender mobilizations often reinforce national boundaries and nationalistic geopolitical positionings, national politics and legal processes have significant impact on gender struggles. We thus find it important to acknowledge the specificities of national contexts.

Despite its recognition as a social-democratic welfare state with state feminism (Svensson and Gunnarsson 2012), contemporary developments in Sweden point to a shift towards neoliberalism in socio-economic policies and the rise of right-wing movements utilizing exclusionary discourses. The ethno-nationalist Sweden Democrats have mobilized anti-gender discourses in conjunction with anti-immigrant and anti-Islam politics, and distinguished between gender equality and feminism where the former represents Sweden's national ethos, differentiating Swedes from immigrants, and the latter erases 'actual' biological differences between men and women, welcomes diversity and cultural heterogeneity (Sager and Mulinari 2018). Over the last few years, anti-gender actors have professionalized and institutionalized, publishing op-eds in significant media outlets and influencing the scientific community. Feminist scholars interpret the movement of anti-feminist, anti-gender, anti-Muslim and racist sentiments from the periphery to the mainstream as the coming of a more radical period of anti-gender mobilizations (Giritli Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018). Importantly, research also shows that anti-genderism in Sweden should 'be analyzed in relation to—and partly as a reaction to and interlinking with—the manifold and messy forms of feminism'. (Lilja and Johansson 2018, 84)

In Germany, anti-gender mobilizations have diverse sources (Villa 2017) and, similarly with Sweden, they do not solely accentuate the Catholic/Christian debates on gender and sexuality. Various tropes of anti-genderism function as a 'symbolic glue' (Kováts and Pöim 2015), bringing together different actors, networks, movements and political parties in their shared rejection of post-essential foundations of identities and rights. In a move that Dietze and Roth (2020) characterize as 'strategic progressivism', nationalist, nativist, xenophobic and populist formations such as the Alternative for Germany, propagate women's rights against immigrants and refugees, implicating that the sexual freedom of women and LGBTI+ people is jeopardized by ethnicized and racialized men, namely, young Muslim immigrant men. Such formations build solidarity through the effective usage of social media and gain public visibility through street protests (Sauer 2019), yet they also encourage solidarity building on the part of feminist and LGBTI+ activists. For instance, the alliance of exclusionary forms of feminism and the far right facilitated the creation of more inclusive feminist spaces aimed at addressing everyday sexism and violence against women in Muslim communities without resorting to far-right racialized discourses (Yurdakul, Özvatan, and Korteweg 2018).

In Turkey, conceptualizations of gender as a threat to the natural order of things took on an Islamist character. The Justice and Development Party government and collaborating civil society actors use the term 'gender justice' to integrate women in modern life without compromising their familial responsibilities, in place of gender equality and LGBTI+ rights that are allegedly imported from the West. Anti-homosexual, anti-trans discourses and ideas propagating women's natural duties as mothers and wives also circulate among secular groups as right-wing populism, anti-Westernism, and mobilizations against divorce and women's right to alimony entangle. Unlike Germany and Sweden, where the main anti-gender mobilizers are oppositional political parties, small religious groups and/or conservative journalists and scientists, in Turkey, as is the case in Hungary, Poland, and Russia, it is mainly the state institutions and civil society actors with organic links to the ruling party who set the tone of the anti-gender debates. Attacks on gender equality and LGBTI+ rights unfold in tandem with illiberalism and democratic backsliding, resulting in 2021 in Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (Arat 2022; Özkazanç 2020). Feminist and LGBTI+ activists pressure the government by taking collective action online, but they are also susceptible to digital repression and surveillance (Şener 2021). Similar to Germany, increasing authoritarian pressures in Turkey facilitates more dialogue and solidarity among women and LGBTI+ activists (Baytok 2021).

Alongside the differences in national contexts regarding gender equality, societal cleavages, and histories of feminist and LGBTI+ activism, activists face similar challenges across Germany, Sweden and Turkey. The lack of

funding and difficulty in securing governmental cooperation are important concerns for 'pro-gender initiatives' and constitute additional burdens for smaller grassroots organizations experiencing financial insecurity (Denkovski and Kreitlow 2021). In contexts of democratic backsliding, right-wing populist actors seek restrictions on civil society including bans on foreign funding, disproportionate auditing, and/or direct violent attacks on activists (Krizsán and Roggeband 2021). In Turkey, feminist and LGBTI+ activists depend on international funding to carry on lobbying and advocacy work (Baytok 2021). Anti-gender actors' active digital media use poses another cross-context issue for activists. For instance, in Sweden, anti-feminist actors occupying the blogosphere employ similar repertoires of action, such as targeting individual feminists in online hate campaigns and hyperlinking feminist individuals and organizations to encourage multitude of anonymous readers to contact and intimidate them (Holm 2019). Similarly, in Turkey, social media is one of the mediums through which anti-gender discourses and politics are being instigated in the form of online harassment coming from networked misogynistic groups (Eslen-Ziya 2022). Digital media also helps facilitate gender struggles in different contexts, for example by making visible political and place-based differences between activists in the case of Germany (Tuzcu 2016) or enabling the dissemination of ideas and expression of dissent in Turkey (Baytok 2021). As we elaborate in the ensuing thematic sections, such issues were also identified by #GenderStruggles participants.

Resistance and resilience: connectedness across scale and context

Understanding resistance both in its everyday, subtle and collective, spectacular forms and as interlocked with subject positions and affects (Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen 2017), we explored the relationship between resistance and resilience in times of online/offline hybridity. Despite the differences between Sweden, Germany and Turkey we discussed in the previous section, we observed that participants perceived resistance and resilience as similarly interconnected across the three contexts.

Notwithstanding the online and offline entanglements in activist struggles; there are features specific to the digital sphere where activists are susceptible to random attacks and online violence. With the COVID-19 pandemic, online activism became more pervasive as social movements and political struggles were compelled to relocate in the digital sphere (Uldam and Askanius 2020). Our workshop discussions displayed a crucial aspect of gender struggles in the digital sphere as the intertwinement of individual and collective activism. Compared to offline settings, personal encounters of anti-gender attacks do not bring activists face-to-face with perpetrators. At first glance, this can be an advantage as people can both speak more directly and detach themselves from anti-gender environments with lesser emotional damages, which might

not be the case in offline encounters especially when they take place in the family, at the workplace, or in one's neighbourhood. Yet, activists often experience digital forms of activism as lacking connectivity and inducing feelings of loneliness, particularly when they are performed individually. Juni, for example, a participant who considers themselves well versed in the digital sphere, finds it hard to engage in online discussions because it is not possible to read into other people's intentions or assess the impact of activist (re-)action due to things that do not easily translate to a digital format such as tone of voice. They are worried whether the person they are engaging in is a troll trying to manipulate and seek reaction or someone with an opinion, interested in dialogue.

Sharing similar feelings of discontent, another participant, Jenny, highlights the collaborative aspect of face-to-face relations where one can understand the other's immediate reaction from their bodily expression and gestures, which is missing in online encounters. Reflecting on their feeling of loneliness in the digital sphere, activists further differentiate between digital media forms that allow for varied levels of user interaction. Some activists' preference for Listservs or Telegram groups is motivated by the multi-directionality of communication in these media compared to Twitter where users can comment on posts and threads but not engage in group discussion. Jule, for example, finds the former less lonely and more tangible because it simulates real life discussion with feedback and interaction. In our analysis, a firm relationship between individual and collective forms of resistance and resilience is linked to activists' overcoming 'digital loneliness'. Despite the conceived impersonality of digital interactions, activists feel personally attacked when performing activism alone. Belonging to solidarity networks or 'circles of care', as we discuss in the next sections, enables collective action in the online space that might be needed spontaneously due to the haphazardness of digital interaction. Especially when expressing negative affect such as anger, rage, or disapproval, being outside of solidarity networks might feel insecure and vulnerable.

When we invited participants to reflect on their choice of successful digital activism in their respective contexts, without exception, the selected campaigns were first organized offline but then promoted in online spaces to boost awareness and trigger collective action, mainly through the use of the hashtags and social media pages for compiling and disseminating photos and narratives. For instance, with the *#ActOut* campaign creating visibility for LGBTI+ people in the film industry and beyond in Germany, personal stories of 185 actors coming out publicly were widely circulated to help empower other LGBTI+ people in the sector. *#ShutDownLindenstraße*, a campaign protesting the deteriorating living conditions in Bremen's Lindenstraße refugee camp, used the hashtag to boost visibility of these conditions. As in the case of the *#IstanbulConventionSavesLives* campaign against Turkey's withdrawal

from the Istanbul Convention, where people physically drew the hashtag slogan with any found material and posted its photos online, the hashtag *#ShutDownLindenstraße* was also printed on fabrics, posters, pavements, or painted outside of houses. Similarly, in Sweden, feminist elections campaigns *#klartvikan* (*#ofcoursewecan*, 2018) and *#taplats* (*#takeplace*, 2014) used pink glasses and pink chairs symbolizing feminist perspectives in Sweden's politics that travelled between online and offline spaces. In each example, hashtags served as framing strategies that enabled crowds to become networked publics desiring to share their stories collaboratively (Papacharissi 2016).

These campaigns do not just highlight online/offline hybridity but also demonstrate the co-construction of individual and collective activism. The participants considered them as successful because they allowed for variation based on individuals' needs and capabilities, yet it was possible for individual action to add up to collective action and lead to a spectacular result. More importantly, they did not only draw on feelings of anger and discontent but opened up space for creativity and happiness. For example, Jenny, referring to the *#taplats* campaign in Sweden, explains that anti-gender actors are good at making people feel strong emotions such as anger. Yet, putting too much emphasis on negative affect exhausts people over time and is counter-productive in building resilience. In Jenny's view, a more constructive way of mobilization is inducing feelings of hope and connectedness, and finding 'fun' ways of resistance. Similarly, Juni problematizes shaming people into action as a mobilization strategy, and argues that enduring, resilient activism should provide people with positive, happy feelings. These views confirm Sundén and Paasonen (2020) argument that the contagious power of laughter stemming from subversive humour deployment against sexism, hate and harassment facilitates feminists' affective mobilization in social media.

Based on these insights, we conclude that building collective resilience emerges as an activist need in the face of anti-gender mobilizations. In this case, resilience is not the neoliberal alternative to resistance but an enabler of resistant practices that develop in affective interaction with others. As a skill, it improves activists' capacity to pursue and sustain everyday struggles within and outside their communities (Jenkins and Rondón 2015). Feminist and LGBTI+ communities benefit from building collective resilience not only to maintain individuals' wellbeing but also to overcome the structural injustices imposed by unequal power relations. 'Political wellbeing', explained as a community's ability to use political participation to maintain social dialogue, is distinct from social welfare but closely linked to redistribution mechanisms (Kobayashi and Kim 2021; Nikiporets-Takigawa and Avcinova 2019, 888). The recent surge in initiatives addressing activist burnout is a testament to the need to acknowledge the connections between individual and political wellbeing (Wilfore 2022; FRIDA 2022). The increasing salience of anti-gender discourses among 'ordinary' or 'pro-gender equality' social and political

communities and the diversity of actors subscribing to these discourses from family members to political figures blurs the boundary between individual and collective resistances and once again highlights activists' urge to build collective resilience to foster individual/political wellbeing. In the next section, we discuss in more detail the resources needed for sustaining feminist and LGBTI+ activism.

Sustainability in a hybrid world: the occasional need to stop to be able to go on

Activists rely on resources to pursue resistant and resilient practices sustainably. These resources can be material, such as financial means and access to infrastructure, or relational/affective. In the anti-gender context, some resources are more needed than others; among the most pronounced by #GenderStruggles participants was time, explained in relation to energy and productivity. Participants talked about needing time not necessarily to do or produce more. On the contrary, they expressed a need to spend 'guilt-free time' on their own, for themselves, away from the constant pressure to be productive. Dwelling on Jule's critique of the conflation of good activism with being active all the time, a central component of neoliberal subjectivity, they found the pressure to be always active counter-productive as it led to burnout, thereby threatening sustainability.

Hybrid activism creates an ambivalent relationship with time. For instance, Deniz talked about feeling pressured to be constantly ready and responsive to write, comment, answer, and act on time. For her, the fact that nothing gets lost in the digital sphere is a complication because one has to think a lot before posting something so ends up spending more time in front of the screen. In other words, while the digital sphere shortens the time needed for certain activities, it also absorbs one's time in a way that digital disengagement becomes a sought-after resource (Kuntsman and Miyake 2019). Moreover, dealing with trolling, or deleting offensive, abusive content involve a lot of affective labor and can become exhaustive (Gleeson 2016). In short, the affective and physical tolls of activism cause activist burnout, namely, 'the act of involuntarily leaving activism, or reducing one's level of activism' (Rettig 2006, 16) and as such it poses a risk to movements' sustainability (Chen and Gorski 2015; Cox 2011). In certain cases, it is the affective bindings activists feel to their work which makes it harder to take breaks due to feelings of guilt and regret (Mendes 2022).

Among the solutions to burnout the participants gave were treating health as a resource, knowing and understanding when one is tired and taking time off, setting up rules for one's self to stop when necessary, and taking care of themselves psychologically and physically. Besides individual solutions, activists seek collective ways of addressing burnout, such as Sabine stressing the

importance of forming care circles and support networks. With the rise of right-wing reactionarism and attacks on women's and LGBTI+ rights and feminisms, Michaeli (2017) points to the urgency of sustaining feminist movements and suggests thinking beyond self-care as guilt and a neoliberal trap. Research on social justice activists also shows that activist burnout operates differently for people belonging to different social groups, for example white and non-white activists (Gorski 2019). The identification of needs and vulnerabilities as well as the determination of who can expect to receive or give care are as much influenced and shaped by gender as it intersects with other privilege markers (Michaeli 2017). So, while individual wellbeing seems to be an important resource for sustaining activism in the context of increasing burnout fostered by anti-gender mobilizations, there is more need to think about how to conceptualize care, in relation to collective resilience and political wellbeing in feminist and queer struggles while simultaneously addressing hierarchies between vulnerabilities and the inequalities in care systems and relations. Such efforts need to then seek responses to structural problems rather than assuming care to be an individual responsibility (Verma, McKnight, and Gabriele 2021).

Networking, outreach, and solidarity building in hybrid times

Closely connected to the ideas of care and support networks is the concept of solidarity which calls for fresh thinking in times of online/offline hybridity. Two of our workshops were dedicated to understanding participants' practices of networking, outreach, and solidarity building. We wanted to know more about how solidarity was conceived of, whom activists aspired to reach out to, and whom they considered as in their care circles and support networks.

Recent research on solidarity practices in feminist scholarship called attention to increased connectivity between activists located in different contexts and a renewed interest on the side of activists in solidarity across difference (Çağatay, Liinason, and Sasunkevich 2022; Littler and Rottenberg 2021). New conceptualizations of solidarity emphasize its 'active' (Einwohner et al. 2021) and 'affective' (Hemmings 2012) aspects. In a similar vein, the #GenderStruggles participants understood solidarity as a political practice enabled by shared motivation and purpose and highlighted three principles that made solidarity practices 'work'. The first was solidarity's situatedness arising from actors' differential positionalities and needs which made solidarity time- and place-specific and implied that there is no universal recipe for success in solidarity building. Second, participants referred to diversity and inclusiveness as key to accommodating differences without necessarily suppressing or transcending them. Ideally, actors involved in solidarity building stood together in harmony without compromising their authentic selves. Together, these two

principles made solidarity a dynamic process with flexibility as its inherent feature. The third principle was longevity, indicating both time and experience as necessary conditions for solidarity building. It took time for actors to understand each other's positionalities and needs; if rushed or simply presumed, solidarity could easily fail or lead to activist burnout.

Online/offline hybridity marked activists' solidarity practices as many of them collaborated with similar groups of people online and offline. An overall view on participants' preferences in terms of networking and outreach shows that for many people 'close friends' and 'local communities' comprised their immediate care circles. Depending on different identities and politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011), local communities included feminist and LGBTI+ people, people of colour and migrants, and human rights activists. In a secondary circle of care resided like-minded people belonging to these groups with whom participants had no personal relationships. Third came support networks comprising ally social movements, NGOs, and institutions. Care circles and support networks existed in the offline sphere in particular locales, but digitally they went beyond local and national boundaries while remaining 'local' in participants' experiences. At the same time, reflecting the dynamic, flexible character of solidarity building, the exact composition of care circles and support networks changed depending on the type of problem activists faced, the support they needed or the audience they aimed to reach out to. For example, NGOs and institutions such as municipalities and universities can move from outer to inner circles when activists need funding or structural assistance.

From the perspective of resistance and collective resilience, activists' reflections on care circles and support networks have three implications. First, the inclusion of close friends in the immediate care circle indicates the importance of affective connections in activism. For Juni, for example, their best friends provide them with emotional support unconditionally, which is a crucial element sustaining their activism. Similarly, Beril considers her best friends as a most important source of support because for her the feeling of trust is what sustains activism. Second, ally institutions and social movements are a significant part of the collectivity that feminist and LGBTI+ activists rely on when pursuing politics. In the past two decades, various social justice struggles have endorsed feminist and queer agendas (Alvarez 2014). According to Conway (2018), this indicates a broader shift in transnational feminist politics where, in the face of neoliberal globalization, feminists seek inter-movement alliances and engage in coalition politics. In the context of anti-gender mobilizations, we find, activists draw even more so on coalition politics and inter-movement alliances to 'extend contemporary feminism as an effective and large-scale project' (Littler and Rottenberg 2021, 864).

Further, solidarity building in hybrid times has its advantages as well as limitations. As a clear advantage, several participants noted the possibility of

expanding their networking and outreach to include people with whom they share similar struggles and purposes but have no possibility to meet offline. This not only contributes to connecting activists in different locales and thereby globalizing feminist and queer struggles but also facilitates change in the offline environment. For instance, based in Germany, Aida collaborates in the digital sphere with various organizations in Poland and Turkey to offer administrative support to feminist and LGBTI+ migrants and people of colour. Her organization helps people to navigate German bureaucracy while Aida herself rarely gets to know them in person. Yet, there are drawbacks of pursuing activism in the digital sphere such as the exclusion of people or political formations who do not use or cannot access digital tools from building collective resilience. For instance, generational gaps can create anxiety and older feminist activists can fear 'being left out or forgotten' because of their lack of digital literacy (Fotopoulou 2016, 996). Participants in our project agree that generational differences matter since, as Deniz said, some are born into the digital age while others are pushed into it. At the same time, they also think that curiosity, with which comes openness to learning, is itself an important resource that is not necessarily tied to age.

However, digital literacy alone does not guarantee one's participation in online activism. Activism in the digital sphere also depends on, as Octo highlighted, access to material resources such as a working computer, fast internet connection, and good technological infrastructure. Class and geopolitical differences between activists result in their differential access to material resources, exacerbating the globalization of certain kinds of feminist and queer struggles while curtailing others'. People with care responsibilities, such as mothers with small children who felt 'stuck at home' during the COVID-19 pandemic as Aida emphasized, might appreciate face-to-face small group gatherings more than the opportunity to connect globally. Collaborating across different locales requires, besides digital literacy, other cultural resources such as knowledge of regionally and universally salient languages, most often English, without which activists cannot establish unmediated communication. In short, as intersecting inequalities in the offline sphere shape the terms of participation in the digital sphere, the inclusion of underprivileged women and queer people in solidarity-building efforts continue being a burning issue that activists face in hybrid times.

A final implication of thinking about solidarity in hybrid times relates to developing onsite and material (e.g. economic and legal) consequences for parties in action and fostering collective resilience without reproducing neoliberal imperatives. For instance, participants highlighted financial solidarity as a crucial element of solidarity in relation to anti-genderism and neoliberalism. They addressed the need to imagine alternative means of financial solidarity that are both sustainable and incorporative of accountability mechanisms that are lacking in certain popularized structures of co- or

crowdfunding. Another neoliberal imperative that complicates sustainability efforts is the commercialized design of social media that encourages the creation of online filter bubbles or echo chambers (Khosravini 2017), which then limits activists' potential to reach their voice or support beyond a close group of like-minded people when using digital media. To mitigate this risk, one participant (Beril) suggests reaching out to people with opposite views to her own and believes that interacting with NGOs and politicians outside one's support network might contribute to generating social change. Based on Beril's suggestion we conclude that the acquisition of knowhow and ability regarding the effective use of digital resources call for further thinking on cross-sectoral as well as cross-movement coalitions and skill-sharing. While echo chambers provide a sense of security, and alleviate digital loneliness thereby benefiting collective resilience, reaching to an outer circle to broaden solidarity emerges as another important activist challenge.

Conclusion

An impetus behind this article is the need to rethink the material and non-material (affective) as well as context-specific elements of the resistance-resilience relationship in the anti-gender context where resilience emerges from grassroots experiences simultaneously as a necessity and a set of practices. Reflecting on the discussions and outputs of a series of digital workshops involving feminist and LGBTI+ activists from Germany, Turkey and Sweden, this article investigated the meanings and aspects of collective resilience in the anti-gender context, and what resilience entails in an increasingly hybrid world of activism. Based on this investigation, it offered a discussion around three themes in particular: the connectedness of resistance and resilience across scale and context, the pronouncing of care and support networks as a much-needed activist resource, and the emergence of the need and efforts to formulate and develop new alliances in the face of the dual challenges of anti-gender mobilizations and neoliberalism. Doing that, it contributes to the scholarship addressing the relationality between resistance and resilience and departs from approaches that see resilience as merely a neoliberal imperative that stands outside, and in opposition to, resistance. It also adds onto research that focuses on the emotional aspects of this relationship.

Our findings point to collective resilience as an important condition of the sustainability of resistance in the context of anti-gender mobilizations and the development of networks of care and solidarity are its crucial elements. Yet, how they can be realized in increasingly digitalized struggles requires further research and dialogue that pay attention to the online/offline hybridity of activism, the co-construction of the codes of conduct and resilience-building practices in the digital sphere as well as critical reflections on existing and potential

exclusions. Our research also showed that positive feelings increase activist resilience, once again situating the idea of resilience not in opposition to resistance but as an enabling mechanism of resistance and political well-being. Participants' emphases on having fun, feeling no shame, taking guilt-free time off, establishing (affective) support networks and care circles, while they can be interpreted as expressions of neoliberal subjectivity or feel good activism, are context bound. What might be seen as a neoliberal imperative in one instance can become a significant element of community and solidarity building in another, namely in the context of anti-gender mobilizations.

The scholarship on anti-gender mobilizations have proliferated in the last several years. Many studies have investigated the sources and implications of anti-gender mobilizations, their discursive as well as material implications, epistemic and political resources they mobilize, and their entanglement with anti-democratic, right-wing, populist, conservative, religious discourses. Although feminist and LGBTI+ activists are directly and poignantly affected by these mobilizations, thus far, there has been limited empirical research on how activists experience these attacks and/or formulate responses to them, as well as how gender struggles keep on unfolding in different contexts. With this article, we aimed to contribute to the scholarship on anti-gender mobilizations as well as feminist and LGBTI+ activisms from a transnational perspective. The increasing reliance of gender struggles on hybrid forms of activism under the dual pressures of anti-genderism and neoliberalism renders whether and how activists stay resilient as important a question as how they resist. In fact, the article showed that these questions are intimately connected. The examples we featured from Germany, Sweden and Turkey also attest to the variability of the contexts and the dynamism of the research terrain. They thus highlight the need for a similar dynamism on the side of research and underline this article's emphasis on the situatedness and mutability of collective resilience and resistance.

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