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Introduction

“We went to a wedding in June,” Zoey said, “and we were seated at the family side.” Zoey clarified: “It was us, the people from the office, sitting at the side of the family, with a few others, and we were introduced as the family. I got to hold a speech on behalf of the family.” As a member of staff in an association for LGBTI+ people with minority background in Norway, this story about becoming family highlights some of the borders that become blurred in feminist and LGBTI+ activisms and illustrates the many layers of connectivity that links non-heterosexual, feminist, migrant, racialized, and colonized populations across national frontiers and multiple spatial scales. Zoey’s narrative about a migrant, gay couple getting married in a church in Greenland shines light on how relationships traversing local and transnational scales can build spaces for feminist, trans,* and queer lives and livabilities within and across places and relations characterized by multiple constraints.

In resonance with other narratives in this book, Zoey’s story illuminates the creative routes through which non-normative geographies of connectivity are shaped within and beyond contemporary Russia,

Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries.¹ By so doing, the narratives collected here brings forth their potential of such linkages to disrupt or by-pass nation-states and challenge the ways in which national borders work to define “(racialized) boundaries through sexual [and gendered] politics” (Suchland 2018, 1073). Despite the distinct and diverse genealogies of feminist and LGBTI+ struggles, the actors and political projects that appear in this book oftentimes recognize their shared features and approach each other as allies in the struggle. Indeed, these movements frequently build coalitions when neoconservative and other violent forces construct these movements as one single enemy. Yet, as highlighted across the pages of this book, these developments have not so much erased the tension between the movements as it has strengthened the solidarities between them, when today they often see themselves encountering similar threats.

In contrast to the bounty of scholarship that approach transnational feminist and LGBTI+ struggles as cross-border organizing (Belmonte 2021; Ferree and Tripp 2006; Patil 2011; Sperling et al. 2001), or as a form of internationalism among nation-scale associations and exchanges on a national–international axis (Conway 2017; Sandell 2015), this book contributes to expand existing understandings of transnational in two main ways: *To begin with*, rather than approaching subjects, places, and histories as separate and comparable, we direct our attention to the relationality between them and explore how gender and sexual politics are

¹The Scandinavian countries are constituted by Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. These countries are distinct and diverse. Simultaneously, they share some significant features, as they are keen to position themselves at the forefront of global progress for women and LGBTI+ people (Liinason 2018). In this book, we engage critically with the frequent description of Scandinavia as a homogenous area, geographically, culturally, socially, and politically, and we argue that a construction of these countries as homogenous needs to be understood as the result of certain demarcations, drawn along the lines of racialized and ethnicized difference, in which notions of gender equality and homotolerance contribute to produce hierarchically differentiating discourses between “us” and “them” (Keskinen et al. 2009). When we discuss phenomena that take place in one of these countries, we refer to Norway, Sweden, or Denmark, while we use the Scandinavian countries, or Scandinavia, to refer to phenomena that, in various ways, are valid in all three countries. We conceptualize the Scandinavian context as an imagined community, providing its citizens with another layer of belonging, in addition to their specific national belongings. Yet, this is not an entirely harmonious or conflict-free relationship but characterized by the multiple power struggles that construct this space.

shaped through this relationality. Our approach is inspired by feminist and queer transnational methodologies with their focus “on the multiplicities *within* locations that make the ‘many-many lives’ in each important, rather than framing locations as discrete units of analysis to be compared” (Browne et al. 2017, 1377). By tracing convergences and contrasts between seemingly disparate places, we employ a transnational lens to bring into focus the “shared location of specific categories of people ... across national frontiers and in contrast to a universal global community” (Martinsson and Mulinari 2018, 6) and reveal the impact of this relationality on gendered and sexual lives and livabilities in specific, located sites (Bhambra 2011, 2014; Subrahmanyam 1997). We seek to reject dominant cartographies that privilege the nation-state or the arena of “global capital” (Gopinath 2018, 5). *Second*, by doing so, the analyses in this book are influenced by a tradition of research that has formulated a nuanced critique of nation-bound models of explanation and brought forward problematic implications of the absence of attention to relations and flows across national frontiers (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Baksh and Harcourt 2015; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010).

As we build further on this research, we aspire to foreground new directions in the field by approaching the transnational on multiple scales and in variegated sites. This allows us to attend to the offline and online spaces created by the appearance and work of feminist and LGBTI+ activism across scales—local, national, regional, global—and in various settings, from the mundane and everyday, to the rare and spectacular. With a focus on connectivities below and beyond the national scale, sub-nationally as well as transnationally nationally, the analyses of this book move beyond a rights-based and state-centered approach to reveal the pluralist convergences, overlaps, and tensions that connect feminist and LGBTI+ activists across Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries. Such linkages, this book shows, have a potential to forge new modes of affiliation, bring inspiration and knowledge to struggles, and offer other ways of being, through which the exclusionary boundaries of the nation-state can be challenged, side-stepped, or temporarily dismantled.

Space, in our use of the concept, is not a passive or flat surface upon which people act, but a product of our relations and connections with

each other (Massey 2005). As a spatial phenomenon, resistance not only takes place in space, but seeks to appropriate space to create new spaces (Pile 1997). Such spaces, this book argues, created by resistance, have an impact on the multiple and ambiguous dynamics of political identities. We are interested in this dynamic potential of spaces of resistance as simultaneously expressing collective forms of protest and creating new relations of connectivity and belonging as an effect—a transgressive potential which we understand as the very stuff of resistance. We explore such spaces of resistance across the chapters of this book: in analyses of how feminist and queer struggles navigate within the ongoing neoconservative turn and in the current conditions of neoliberalism (Chapter 3), through explorations of feminist and LGBTI+ practices of solidarity across borders, belongings, and movements (Chapter 4), and through examinations of the corporeal and embodied dimensions of transnational feminist and LGBTI+ activisms (Chapter 5).

Foregrounding an understanding of transnational communities as characterized by a prominence of diversity, variety, and multiplicity (Franklin et al. 2000; Al-Ali 2000; Grewal 2005), this book suggests the usefulness of approaching the transnational as a process, activity, or event. By doing so, we conceptualize the transnational as carrying a possibility for unexpected encounters, for moving beyond monolithic notions of the West, and for conceptualizing feminist and queer struggles as multiple, contradictory, and transgressive. The concept of transnationalizing, as Dufour et al. (2010) suggest, brings attention to enactments of solidarity which not only extends across borders but also seeks to overcome a tendency to compartmentalize struggles: “the transnationalization of solidarities refers to the processes not only by which solidarities travel beyond established national borders, but also by which they are deepened among women or among feminists. ... Solidarities may also be ‘stretched’ beyond feminist and women’s constituencies and beyond women’s issues” (4). While feminism and queer indeed include different struggles with particular histories and visions, in this book, we follow the initiative of scholars who, in similarity with Dufour et al. (2010), have recognized the similar challenges encountered by women and LGBTI+ subjects. Situated in a broader ongoing discussion on building coalitions across movements (Carty and Mohanty 2015; Butler 2015), this book

sees such coalitions between feminism and queer as potentially transformative. Rather than focusing on the discontinuities between different struggles or focusing on a fixed moment in time when a particular claim was met by policy change, we take an interest in stressing the links between struggles, attending to the points of connectivity that take shape and produce spaces of resistance across different scales and sites.

Informed by our understanding of feminist and LGBTI+ struggles as a history of continuing contestations, this book follows a topic-based structure instead of a linear or unidirectional logic structured by a chronological or geographical master frame. Influenced by Clare Hemmings' (2005) insights into ways of imagining feminist and LGBTI+ pasts differently, we offer an analysis of feminist and LGBTI+ activism within and across three seemingly different contexts, as we ultimately aspire to deepen existing understandings of what these transnational enactments, characterized by overlaps as well as tensions, can teach us about struggles for gender and sexual justice as a history of ongoing struggles rather than a series of linear displacements, as we set out to shine light on the plural and creative connectivities between feminist and LGBTI+ struggles within and across Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries.

Transnationalizing Feminist and LGBTI+ Activisms in Russia, the Scandinavian Countries, and Turkey

Existing scholarship in gender studies rarely brings Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries under one roof (notable exceptions are Dogangün 2019; Sümer and Eşlen-Ziya 2017). These contexts belong to historically distinguished geopolitical regions with Russia's embeddedness in (post-)socialist geographies (Stella 2015; Suchland 2011; Tlostanova 2012), Turkey's gravitation toward the Middle East (Işıksal and Göksel 2018; White 2013), and Scandinavia's positionality in the European North (Dahl et al. 2016; Hilson 2008). Their histories of struggles for women's rights and sexual liberties significantly vary. Neither

of them fit neatly in the established categories of West–East and North–South. The three contexts are seldom interrogated together in existing debates on transnational feminism and queer solidarities where North–South tensions are more salient (Ghodsee 2019; Tlostanova et al. 2019). Currently, Russia and Turkey, on the one hand, and Scandinavian countries, on the other, have remarkably different positionalities in gender and sexual politics with the latter seen as forerunners of democracy, gender equality, and homotolerance, whereas the former as leaders in anti-gender and homophobic campaigns aimed at the consolidation of authoritarian state power (Arik et al., 2022). Acknowledging the distinct trajectories of Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries in struggles around gender equality and sexual rights as its point of departure, this book simultaneously offers to investigate overlaps and similarities alongside divergences between these struggles.

We situate the discussions in this book in the shifts and continuities following distinct projects of modernization in Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries. We approach such projects of modernization by attending to the processes of normalization, expansion of capitalist markets, projects of imperialism and colonialism/coloniality in the variegated contexts of the book. We also highlight how globalization, neoliberalism, and controversies over gender equality and sexual rights forged by global governance and neoconservative and fundamentalist forces alike currently reshape the terrain of varieties of modernization into a more coherent, transnationally intertwined period. In exploring the historical roots and legacies of these modernization projects, we have been influenced by Foucault's notion of biopolitics, which allows us to attend to the ways in which the population itself has become an object of political intervention (Lemke 2011, 33; see also Butler 2015; Foucault 1978, 2008; Mbembé 2003).

Our point of departure is that politics of gender and sexuality varied over time across the regions we are writing about. The counterpositioning of Turkey and Russia vis-a-vis Scandinavia in terms of gender equality and women's rights is a relatively recent phenomenon that is traceable to the early 2010s when Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were consolidating authoritarian political power in Russia and Turkey, respectively. The revival of traditional patriarchy with an appeal

to the Orthodox Christianity in Russia and Sunni Islam in Turkey as opposed to the values of “corrupted West” (Dogangün 2019, 2) is in stark contrast with the processes of (r)evolutionary modernization of gender relations and sexuality that Turkey, Scandinavian countries, and Soviet Russia underwent almost simultaneously in the 1910s–1930s (Çakır 1994; Durakbaşı 2000; Güneş-Ayata and Acar 1999; Sancar 2012; Florin 2006; Melby et al. 2009; Engelstein 1992; Roldugina 2018; Wood 1997). The continuities and shifts of these developments shape the historical landscapes within which contemporary activism in Russia, Turkey, and Scandinavia is embedded, which we in the following turn to illuminate shortly.

Varieties of Modernization in the Early Twentieth Century

In Russia, groundbreaking changes in gender and sexual politics occurred in the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917, which brought the new Soviet state and its “alternative project of modernity” into life (Kondakov 2019; Wood 1997). Reformation of legislation that the Bolsheviks inherited from the Russian Empire led to the decriminalization of homosexuality and prostitution in 1917 and abortion in 1920. The legal and political changes created space for liberalization of public moral norms and codes and for the emergence of new “politically emphasized subjectivities” (Roldugina 2018, 9) based on gender and sexuality. At the same time, in Turkey, in contrast to many European cities of the early twentieth century, LGBTI+ people could enjoy sexual freedoms and even freely engage in sex work upon paying taxes (Çetin 2016, 6; Schick 2020). Debates around gender and sexuality were part of nation-building and population and health policies already prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Balsoy 2016; Miller 2007; Toprak 2017). Kemalist reforms in the early Republican period, such as the 1926 Civil Code that outlawed polygamy and brought gender equality in the matters of marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, strengthened women’s position in the family and society and enabled their public participation in greater numbers. Further, in Scandinavia, the emergence

of the modern welfare state in the 1920s and 1930s, in response to high poverty levels, poor housing, falling birth rates, and unemployment, brought women's and sexual rights to the fore of the public discussion.

Projects of modernization in these three contexts were distinctive in relation to each other and, in the case of Turkey and Russia, particularly shaped in relation to Western/European modernity that “served as a benchmark against which cultures on the European margin judged themselves” (Engelstein 1992, 9). Nonetheless, control over gender relations and sexuality as a biopolitical mechanism for consolidating state power in the process of transitioning from peripheral empires/monarchies to modern nations were present in all three contexts. In some aspects, the early twentieth century modernizing politics of governing gender relations and sexuality in Russia, the Scandinavian countries, and Turkey are remarkably aligned. Their aim was to establish a modern secular state and society with the help of political and legal reforms, education, scientific knowledge, and expertise at the expense of producing clear boundaries between deviance and normality. In the early Soviet Russia as well as early Republican Turkey, “deviance” was defined as embodied by illiterate women from peasantry, seen as traditional thus backward; women involved in prostitution; and women from non-Russian and non-Orthodox (in the Soviet case) and non-Turkish and non-Sunni Muslim (in the Turkish case) ethnic and religious groups (Gradszkova 2013, 2020; Ülker 2008; Wood 1997; Yeğenoğlu 1998). In the Scandinavian countries, working mothers, poor mothers with “too many” children, ethnic minority women, illiterate women, and women involved in prostitution were opposed to the “normality” of the bourgeois middle-class of the dominant society. Thus, at their core, modernization processes of Russia, Scandinavia, and Turkey, though distinct from each other in manner and scale, followed a path of Western/European modernity with their shift from a repressive to a productive mode of power where the anatomo-politics of human body and biopolitics of population overlapped (Foucault 2006 [1976]).²

²It is important to acknowledge that a repressive, state-centered mode of power never ceased existence in Soviet Russia. It especially thrived during political repressions of the Stalinist period. This is the reason why historians of Soviet Russia still debate whether the term *modernity* is at all applicable to the Russian history (David-Fox 2016). While the applicability of *modernity*

Cold War Rivalries and Transnational Organizing

Variegated versions of modernity that arose in the local contexts of Soviet Russia, Scandinavia, and Turkey in the early twentieth century laid the foundation for competitive narratives of women's emancipation after World War II. Transnational exchanges were central for shaping alliances between women's activists in different countries and, in some cases, gave legitimacy for supporting women's rights in national contexts. To situate contemporary feminist activism in the three contexts of the book in such historical legacy of transnational exchanges, below we provide a brief illustration of some of these transnational exchanges.

With its roots in socialism, the Soviet idea of gender equality understood "women's question" as incorporated into struggles against class inequalities, imperialism, and global capitalism. The Soviet model of women's emancipation was an ideological cornerstone of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a transnational women's organization established by pro-communist and anti-fascist women from forty countries in November 1945 in Paris (de Haan 2010; Gradskova 2020). Being deprived of the possibility for independent political organizing within the Soviet Union, Soviet women took an active role in transnational political struggles as members of the WIDF (Gradskova 2020). The role of WIDF is often disregarded in the historiography of transnational women's movement due to its close association with the Soviet Union (Ghodsee 2019; Gradskova 2020; de Haan 2010). Indeed, transnationalization of the women's question in this context was to some extent a side effect of Cold War rivalries between the socialist East led by Soviet Russia and the capitalist West (Gradskova 2020; Ghodsee 2019). Yet, the WIDF played a significant role in initiating the UN International Women's Year in 1975 and paved the way to the Convention

to the late-Ottoman and early Republican periods is not contested by historians in a similar manner, the "strong state" thesis is similarly present in the Turkish case (Berkes 1998; Hanioglu 2008; Heper 1985; Mardin 1973). We share the opinion of scholars who claim that Russia's and Turkey's approaches to the regulation of sexuality and gender relations in the twentieth century was in line with European modernity (Balsoy 2016; Engelstein 1992; Kondakov 2019; Stella 2015; Suchland 2018; Toprak 2017).

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), important milestones in the history of transnational feminism as well as the emergence of a global gender equality agenda that was later adopted by women from the global West, East, and South (Antrobus 2004; Ghodsee 2019; Gradska 2020; de Haan 2010). In the aftermath of WWII, Turkey aligned with the West “as a Muslim country fighting against Soviet communism” and with aspirations for integration in the capitalist world system (Brockett 2011, 22; Zürcher 2004). Most of them established in the 1950s and 1960s by Kemalist women, women’s organizations in this period embraced agendas that were in line with those of dominant women’s organizations in the West, such as the International Council of Women and the International Women’s Alliance (Scott 2017). The International Women’s Year in 1975 and the ensuing UN Decade for Women (1975–1985) gave these organizations a legitimate framework in which to participate in decision-making processes at the national level promoting gender equality and to reverse the conservative turn of the early Cold War period (Çağatay 2017; Sancar 2012). Similarly, the involvement of Scandinavian women in transnational contexts, such as the UN women’s conferences, resulted in stronger and more comprehensive frameworks to sustain and expand questions of women’s rights nationally (Kjærsgaard 2018). Women’s rights activists in Scandinavia had a long-term engagement in transnational women’s organizations, not least the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (Sandell 2015), established in the Hague, the Netherlands, in 1915 (Eklund and Härén 2015; Theorin 2015), working against militarism, for peace and solidarity across borders. They were also involved in the Women’s International Democratic Federation. In relation to this exchange, the ties between the Federation and the Women’s Socialist Association in Sweden were particularly strong with one Swedish member upholding key posts in the organization across several years in the 1940s, -50s, and -60s (de Haan 2010). During the Cold War, all Scandinavian countries took up anti-imperialist positionings, especially in relation to the Vietnam war, and despite the fact that Norway and Denmark from 1949 were members of NATO. These anti-imperialist positionings still give an imprint on the international image of these countries (Keskinen et al. 2009). While the Nordic countries often

are missing in the historiography of the UN women's conferences, for women's rights activists and parliamentarians of these countries, the UN women's conferences as well as the ratification of CEDAW have been central (Kjærsgaard 2018; Quataert 2012). Scholars detail how these conferences shaped a space for engagement, exchange, community, and network building among women parliamentarians, transnationally and in transnordic exchanges as well as within respective national contexts (Kjærsgaard 2018), which helped to shape a structure to develop national policy measures for strengthening the equality for women.

Due to substantial differences in history and legislations regulating and organizing homosexuality, the development of LGBTI+ politics in Russia, Turkey and Scandinavia after WWII has been uneven.³ In Russia, male homosexuality (*muzhelozhstvo*, lit. "man lying with man") remained criminalized from 1933 until 1993 while women's same-sex desire was treated as medical abnormality and subjected to psychiatric intervention (Stella 2015). Although alternative spaces and terms for experiencing and describing homosexuality existed in Soviet Russia (Essig 1999; Kondakov 2014, 2019; Stella 2015), homosexual subjectivity, with the exclusion of the 1920s (Roldugina 2018), was criminalized (Essig 1999). At the same time, Scandinavia, and Sweden in particular, gained an international reputation as being sex-positive as it introduced sexual education in public schools by the end of the 1940s and established liberal legislation regarding pornography in the 1960s and 1970s (Arnberg 2009). While attitudes regarding sexuality were more conservative in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden, with the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1972, compared with 1933 in Denmark and 1944 in Sweden, although these countries didn't abolish the designation of homosexuality as an illness until 1979 (Sweden) and 1981 (Denmark) (Nyegaard 2011),⁴ the formal recognition of sexual rights in Norway has since then been

³The problem with universal applicability of the term "LGBTI+" in relation to the histories of Russia, Scandinavia, and Turkey is discussed in the next section.

⁴In Norway, the designation of homosexuality as an illness was "partly removed" in 1977 (Hofstad 2014, 1).

more swift with registered partnership of same-sex relationships established in the early 1990s and with the same-sex marriage law in January 2009 as the first Nordic country (compared with the legislation of gay marriages in Sweden later in the same year, and in Denmark in 2012) (Wickman 2012). Broader transnational and transnordic exchanges in LGBTI+ activism in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are recognized as crucial in the histories of the nation-wide organizations in Scandinavia. For example, established as a Swedish section of the Danish organization the Association of 1948 (*Förbundet af 1948*). RFSL became an independent organization in 1952. Further, LGBT Denmark was one of seven founding members of the International lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex association (ILGA) in Coventry, UK, in 1978 (Paternotte et al., n.d.). While previous research on LGBTI+ activism in the Scandinavian context have focused mainly on national developments, ongoing research is examining transnational exchanges in the history of Scandinavian LGBTI+ activism, with the project NordiQueer as an example, involving an interdisciplinary group of scholars from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.⁵ Differently, in Turkey, homosexuality was never criminalized. Up until the 1970s, public discourses and policies around sexual orientation and gender identity have been remarkably absent, leading researchers to interpret outright discrimination against non-normative sex as a reaction to Turkey's Europeanization (e.g., Çetin 2016). At the same time, the modern state systematically ignored equal rights and protection for LGBTI+ people (Çetin 2016; Muedini 2018). Gender reassignment has been accessible since the late 1980s, but same-sex relationships are still not legally recognized except as an offense to public morality when visible in the public sphere. LGBTI+ rights were somewhat secured in the 2000s (e.g., the article no. 122 of the Criminal Code on hate and discrimination), but little was done to eliminate the crimes committed against LGBTI+ people including the brutal murders of transwomen (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018, 22; Zengin 2016).

⁵See <https://www.gender.lu.se/nordiqueer-nordic-queer-revolution>.

Contemporary Contestations of Gender Equality and Sexual Rights

The end of Cold War intensified transnational collaborations within feminist and LGBTI+ activism. After seventy years of state surveillance, repressions and underground activities, independent civil society flourished in Russia. Women's organizations that aligned with feminism to various degrees occupied a prominent role in this process. Decriminalization (1993) and depathologization (1999) of homosexuality also paved the way for the emergence of grassroots LGBTI+ activism in the country (Kirey-Sitnikova 2020; Kondakov 2019). The opening of Soviet borders allowed increased collaboration with the international activist community and foreign donors (Hemment 2007; Johnson 2009; Khodyreva 2020; Sundstrom 2006). The support from the US and Scandinavian governments and civil society organizations played a prominent role in this process (Gradszkova 2019; Johnson 2009; Sperling et al. 2001). While gender equality and sexual rights became a litmus test for Russia's transition from state socialism to liberal democracy, public discourses and state policies around gender and sexuality in Turkey were largely informed by Turkey's commitment to Europeanization and the UN-led gender equality agenda. The 1990s saw the institutionalization and NGOization of different women's movements, including feminist, Kemalist, Kurdish, and Islamic, that competed over the definition of women's interests as well as donor funds with which to pursue their agendas (Arat 2001; Çağatay 2017; Ertürk 2006; Kardam 2005). In the 2000s, Turkey's EU accession prospect enabled significant improvements in women's rights as the notion of gender equality got incorporated in the Constitution (2004, 2010), the Penal Code (2004), and the Labor Code (2003) (Müftüler-Baç, 2012). The mainstreaming of gender equality as required by the EU led to the establishment of issue-based platforms that brought together feminist, Kemalist, Islamic, and Kurdish women's; LGBTI+ and human rights organizations (Aldıkaçtı Marshall 2013; Çağatay 2018a). While the legacy of these platforms has enabled broader alliances for gender equality and sexual rights against their increasing violation today, feminist and LGBTI+ activists' embeddedness in transnational networks and reliance on funding from UN and

EU structures and individual states such as Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands, led to their depiction by conservative, fundamentalist, and ultra-nationalist actors as non-national, Western agents (Acuner 1999; Kandiyoti 2016).

Whereas Russia and Turkey were invited to align their gender and sexuality politics with the post-Cold War liberal democratic agenda, Scandinavian countries took as their ambition to lead the very process of agenda setting (Einarsdóttir 2020; Jezierska and Towns 2018; Valaskivi 2016). Being described as a moral super power (Nilsson 1991) and a harmonious cluster of nations, associated with “development aid, peace building and cooperation” (Keskinen et al. 2009, 16), Norway, Denmark, and Sweden promoted gender equality and sexual rights as part of a liberal ideology at the core of their national and regional self-understanding. By doing so, they also drew a clear boundary between a gender-equal and homotolerant “us” as part of the liberal democratic West and a misogynistic and homophobic “them,” represented by the global South and East (Liinason 2018). Hence, the end of Cold War as the “end of history” intensified the universal hegemony of Western liberal democracy (Fukuyama 1992) and expansion of a rights-centered, policy-based understanding of gender equality and sexual citizenship to contexts with different political cultures and history (Ghodsee 2004; Husakouskaya 2018; Klappeer 2017; Mizieleńska and Kulpa 2011).

Historical developments described above inform our understanding of the recent counterpositioning of Russia and Turkey vis-à-vis Scandinavia in terms of gender equality and sexual rights. As both the Russian and the Turkish governments, along with those in countries such as Poland or Hungary, clearly frame feminist and LGBTI+ agendas as “[perverse] ideologies of an arrogant Western neoliberal elite” (Shirinian 2020), we acknowledge that their anti-gender and homophobic politics is a part of a global contest aimed at challenging Western epistemological, economic, and geopolitical hegemony (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Çağatay 2019; Edenborg 2017; Korolczuk and Graff 2018; Moss 2017; Özkazanç 2019, 2020). As Rao (2020, 11) argues, the “civilizational logic of homonationalism,” or the acceptance of liberal LGBTI+ rights by the states, serves as “a barometer of nation’s fitness for sovereignty.” Opposed to homonationalism is “heteronationalism” (Moss 2014, cited in Shirinian 2020),

an anti-gender homophobic ideology, which right-wing nationalists or nationalistic state elites from the “illiberal East” employ to push against the West (Shirinian 2020).

Notwithstanding that Turkey and Russia, on the one hand, and the Scandinavian countries, on the other, are situated on the opposite ends of the gender equality and sexual rights barometer, the centrality of these struggles for national imaginary and geopolitical positionality of all three contexts is striking. As we argue elsewhere, at stake here is “the structural realignment of the sovereign nation-state in facing simultaneous challenges from above from supranational entities and global capitalist markets, and from below from grassroots movements who refer to international law and human rights” (Arik et al., 2022; see also Barker 2017). In this book, we attentively investigate how feminist and LGBTI+ activists navigate the complexity of a multi-polar world (Kahlina and Ristivojević 2015) where gender equality and sexual rights are, on the one hand, under continuous threat from authoritarian states (Kandiyoti 2016; Kondakov 2014; Moss 2017), conservative religious powers (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017), and right-wing intellectuals (Martinsson 2020); on the other hand, they are instrumentalized within discourses of Western sexual and gender exceptionalism and reproduction of (post)colonial hierarchies (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Husakouskaya 2018; Klappeer 2017; Kulpa 2014).

Navigating Contested Terms

The variegated, yet overlapping, developments of struggles for gender and sexual justice in Russia, Scandinavia, and Turkey make the issue of language and terminology particularly salient. Although the terms and labels we use throughout the book such as feminism, LGBTI+, queer, activism, NGOs, West–East, and North–South are well established in the discipline of gender studies as well as in activist circles across the contexts we write about, we also recognize that each of these terms have politically and theoretically laden histories behind. In the book, LGBTI+ activism refers to grassroots and organizational struggles centered around sexuality, gender identity, and non-heterosexual desire.

Each category recognized in this abbreviation, namely Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and sexual and gender spectrum (+) as well as the initialism itself has strong roots in Western-centered activist practices and, therefore, reflects a Western bias and establishes a distinction between prepolitical same-sex relations and politicized, out and modern, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersex subjectivities (e.g., Manalansan 1997). Moreover, identities included in LGBTI+ used to have unequal status in the history of LGBTI+ struggles with “gay” being the dominant mode of LGBTI+ activism until the 1980s⁶ and trans being included into these struggles only in the late 1990s (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014). While in the USA trans activists explicitly advocated for being included in LGBTI+ initialism and organizations, in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, for example, where the term LGBTI+ was borrowed from Western activist practices, “homosexual activism was self-labeled as ‘LGBT’, even if ‘B’ and ‘T’ were purely discursive invocations” (Kulpa and Mizelińska 2011, 4; Kirey-Sitnikova 2020). As Kirey-Sitnikova (2020) argues, trans people in the region who did not previously collaborate with lesbian and gay activism found this automatic “inclusion” forceful and unjust (Kirey-Sitnikova 2020, 782). Thus, LGBTI+ is a contested term in the contexts of our study, and there is a tendency to reclaim and politically reinscribe colloquial, sometimes pejorative, terminology that designates same-sex desire and practice (e.g., Gorbachev 2019; Ilmonen et al. 2017; Mamedov 2019; Wickman 2012). Yet, since English is the *lingua franca* of transnational LGBTI+ activism (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Husakouskaya 2019), this initialism is widely recognized by our research partners.

The Anglo-American term “queer” has been taken up in different ways in the contexts of the research. In Scandinavia, for instance, scholars have cautioned for the risks of queer to become “too popular” and depoliticized (Dahl 2009, 145; 2011). During the early 2000s, the term queer was introduced in Norwegian (Bolsø 2010), however since then, the term *skeiv* has become more popular. Yet, critics argue, *skeiv* lost some of the transformative or deconstructive force of the concept since *skeiv*

⁶For example, ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association), the first and the most influential organization in the history of the global LGBTI+ activism, was called International Gay Association until 1986 (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014, 9).

was never derogatory to the same extent as queer in Anglo-American linguistic contexts (Andersen et al. 2004). Sweden adopted the term queer in the mid-1990s and in Denmark, queer was incorporated into everyday language in the early 2000s. In both these contexts, queer was closely connected to feminism, and some scholars argue that critical edge in the political movement was lost as a result of this close relationship, criticized for cutting the ties between queer theory and sex radicalism (Rosenberg 2006; Kulick 2005; Wickman 2012; Ilmonen et al. 2017).

We define feminism as a broadly understood political activity (see Arik et al., 2022), protesting against gender oppression and exploitation, aimed at improving an economic, cultural, political, and social situation of women. Given the contested, even antagonistic, understanding of feminism in Russia (Khodyreva 2020; Sperling 2015), Turkey (Saygılıgil and Berber 2020), and Scandinavia (Kulick 2005; Dahl 2009), the broad definition of feminism allows us to recognize and include in our analysis the struggles that avoid self-identifying as feminist while endorsing feminist principles on their agenda. While there have been tensions between feminism and queer (Brade et al. 2013), the two have also been closely connected to each other, for instance, in the Scandinavian context especially involving lesbian activists for whom queer feminism have been a fruitful term to designate performative and spectacular, disobedient forms of political expression (Laskar 1996 in Wickman 2012). Furthermore, in our research contexts, activists relate to feminism in different ways. For instance, in Turkey, women who organized in left-socialist organizations historically avoided the term feminist. In the 2010s the rise of intersectional feminism and attacks on gender equality and sexual rights have led many young women to identify as feminist. Still, due to the participation of some women's groups who are critical of the term, tensions remain. Another trend we observed in Turkey is that activists identify themselves but not their organizations as feminist, to provide an inclusive space also for those women who are prejudiced against or not knowledgeable of feminism.

Further, related to the various historical contexts of the sites and struggles involved in this book, the terms that designate the sphere and practice of political action—civil society, NGOs, and activism—have a variegated trajectory impregnated by the many local developments

and rejections of the positionalities these terms imply in relation to notions and practices of the state. For example, in Scandinavia, the term nongovernmental organization (NGO) is rarely used, which results from the more or less active involvement of the state in all activities of civil society—an involvement which today most often translates to funding of activities. In this context, civil society actors also often have a close collaboration with state actors, a relationship that carries further the historical trajectory of the social democratic welfare state emergent from the early twentieth century onwards. Before the 2000s, the notion of voluntary organization was more frequently in use. Resulting from the neoliberal reconfigurations of these states, the current concept used by and for the organizations in the Scandinavian context is civil society organization (CSO), so also in this book. A similar situation concerns the Turkish context, within which CSO is the concept used by the organizations, replacing the notion of voluntary organizations of the pre-2000 era. However, in the Turkish case, the preference for CSO instead of NGO stands for actors' self-positioning in the sphere of civil society as opposed to the state sphere (Duruşan 2008), rather than indicating their organizations' engagement with the state or its lack thereof. In Russia, several contested terms to describe civil society organizing is in use including *obshchestvennye organizatsii* (societal organizations), *tretii sektor* (the third sector), NKO (*nekommercheskaia organizatsiia*, non-profit organization), and NPO (*nepravitelstvennaia organizatsiia*, nongovernmental organization). The first term is inherited from the Soviet times (Evans 2006), the last three emerged in the mid-1990s as the adoption of Western terminology intensified signifying international collaboration and donor support in Russian civil society (Salmenniemi 2008). The term activism is also disputable. Some research partners in Russia and the Scandinavian countries consciously refrained from defining themselves as “activists” or as “political” because they did not feel to be active (meaning: political) enough to claim this definition (see Arik et al., 2022). By contrast, in Turkey, some research partners avoid identifying as activists as they find this term too liberal, apolitical, or a Western import. For them, their activist work can simply be framed as “doing politics” (*politika yapmak*), which they consider as radical and militant activity.

Lastly, given the ambiguous positioning of our research partners vis-à-vis the North–South and East–West distinctions (Keskinen et al. 2009; Tlostanova 2012; Yanik 2011) in this book we deploy the North together with the West, and the South together with the East. Instead of taking these notions for granted, we highlight their performativity in activist imaginaries and positionings. Seeing that the contexts of our book does not fit neatly into the categories of North–South and West–East, we engage with these distinctions critically. The concept semi-periphery has been used for shedding light on regions and locales located beyond the core and the periphery of the world system (Blagojevic 2009). We find this a useful concept which allows us to encompass a situation where Turkey, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries are at once positioned as important actors on a global arena, yet in many debates and developments, still sidelined. The notion of semi-periphery challenges the idea of a bi-polar world, bringing instead attention to multi-polar struggles (Kahlina and Ristivojević 2015), which to us has been a fruitful way of conceptualizing the variously peripheral positionings of the geopolitical contexts in this book.

Multi-scalar Transnational Methodology

This book is written in the spirit of transnational feminism's emphasis on the politics and praxis of hope (Ahmed 2014; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Browne et al. 2017; Chowdhury and Philipose 2016; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Fernandes 2013; Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010; Liinason and Cuesta 2016; Martinsson and Mulinari 2018). Emerging as a challenge to the study of geographic regions in terms of area studies where places as bounded locales are demarcated and disconnected from each other, transnational feminist perspectives highlight the interdependence of the lives of women and LGBTI+ people across borders and argue that academic knowledge of regions cannot be separated from their interconnected histories (Schaeffer 2016). With the aim of advancing methodological discussions in transnational feminism, in this book we develop a methodology for the study of transnationalizing feminist and queer struggles. As a research methodology, transnationalism entails that

scholarly explorations investigate the flows, linkages, relationships, and identities across multiple units and levels of analysis, in order to grasp transnational processes and realities (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Dufour et al. 2010; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Khagram and Levitt 2008; Roy 2016). In the past two decades, much research in feminist and queer scholarship have contributed to methodological discussions around the transnational by critically engaging with globalism, regionalism, strict oppositions between the local and the global, and the salience of the nation-state as the main unit of analysis (Basu 2016; Çakırlar 2016; Grewal 2005; Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010; Mohanty 2013; Rao 2014). In studies on activism and activist practices, however, much of the transnationalism-inspired scholarship has focused on exchanges across national borders or the ways in which local contexts are shaped by discourses, identifications, and repertoires of action that are globally salient (Churchill 2009; Conway 2010; Crang et al. 2003; Ferree and Tripp 2006; Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011; Patil 2011). What distinguishes our approach in this book is the focus on scales that are both “finer” and “coarser” than that of the nation-state (Hyndman 2001, 210). Employing a multi-scalar transnational approach (Cerwonka 2008; Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010; Nash and Browne 2015; Valentine 2018), we wish to develop more nuanced understandings of gender equality and sexual rights activism and how dynamics across different scales influence practices at various local sites, and decenter hegemonic versions of feminist and LGBTI+ activism within and across the three contexts of our research.

As we progressed with our research in Turkey, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries over a four-year period (2017–2020), multi-scalarity emerged as a significant dynamic to be addressed in transnationalizing activism. Among our research participants were activists who pursued politics on different, often multiple, scales; some of whom engaging in large-scale and well-established transnational and national organizations, while others participated in small-scale, informal, grassroots initiatives. In line with the high level of mobility of the late-capitalist era, activists often changed location, moving across the North/West and South/East axis as well as between metropole and province. With the advancement of digital technologies sources of influence multiplied on local, national,

regional, and global levels. Notions, concepts, identities, and even the meaning of activism changed based on activists' belongings, positionality, and geographical location. We needed to attend to these simultaneously, without privileging any of the scales over others but discussing at each instance their specific influence. Against this background, we set out to trace the linkages between our seemingly unrelated contexts by relating them to each other through their "common differences" (Mohanty 2003). This way, we were able to mitigate the shortcomings of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) that is characteristic of studies that rely on comparison as their primary method of analysis. At the same time, we parted from a globalist approach that looked at developments and influences that are only worldwide in scope but focused on how seemingly local-only practices and discourses, and sub-national scales of analysis were still relevant for the study of the global (Sassen 2010).

Multi-scalar transnational methodology shaped our data analysis into a "collaborative process of looking for connections or points of convergence in our empirical material collected in different geopolitical contexts" (Arik et al., 2022). Inspired by feminist and queer research that implemented dialogue as a method of knowledge production (Brosi and hooks 2012; Browne et al. 2017; Butler and Spivak 2007; Mohanty and Carty 2018; Mohanty et al. 2021; Mountz et al. 2015), we analyzed our research findings at regularly held project meetings, searching for differences as well as overlaps across our research fields. After each meeting we moved on to further stages of research weaving our fields together through transnational collaboration.⁷

Echoing our multi-scalar transnational methodology, we employed an "ethnographically informed micro-level approach" to activism (Salmenniemi 2008, 11). With its attention to the "micro-politics" of everyday life, this approach was in line with our understanding of resistance as a space between the mundane daily life practices and macro-scale contestations of political power (Chapter 2). The micro-level approach

⁷On several occasions, we also had a chance to develop our multi-scalar transnational methodology in conversation with a transnational network of scholars (FFQS 2019; Mohanty and Carty 2018; Transnational Solidarities 2018). These conversations assisted us to situate our research contribution within a broader framework of transnational ethnography.

as close, oftentimes long-lasting, friendly collaborative engagements with organizations and initiatives allowed to explore the interaction between activist agency and structural constraints as well as to recognize them as resistance practices that are often overlooked by civil society scholars who focus on visible, large-scale forms of contentious politics.

Within and across our contexts, we used multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in feminist and LGBTI+ activism. As a mobile methodology, multi-sited ethnography was very well suited for our examinations of feminism and LGBTI+ activism as micro-politics in emergent cultural formations within and across various locations, as it enabled us to collect a range of different examples brought together under a more general topic, such as the relationship between state, civil society, and the market in feminist and LGBTI+ activism within and beyond national borders (Chapter 3), or the International Women's Day, conceptualized as an event with linkages across time and space (Chapter 5). It allowed us to follow certain concepts, stories, or even activists upon their travel beyond place-based locations and to scrutinize cases where activists brought certain place-based, limiting, or prejudiced notions to the exchange, enabling us to pay attention to the complex tensions arising as a result (see Chapter 4). Employing this methodology, we were able to go deep into but also move out from the single sites of exploration to trace notions, practices, communities, and places and catch sight on the broader social, geopolitical, cultural, and political dynamics to which these expressions and performances of feminist and LGBTI+ activism contributed and themselves were a part.

Fieldwork in/on Russia

The fieldwork for the Russian case started in March 2017 at the seminar "International Cooperation with Russia in Changing Times" jointly organized by the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Institute in Stockholm. The participants of the seminar—representatives of civil society organizations in Russia and Sweden—discussed how Russian civil society was affected by the political developments on

global, regional, and national levels determined by authoritarian tendencies, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and following imposition of economic and political sanctions by Western countries, and Russia's crackdown against "Western agents" including human rights, LGBTI+, and women's organizations. The fieldwork material includes a number of other transnational events with a focus on Russia and the post-Soviet space such as the Fucking Solidarity conference in Vienna in 2017 (see Chapter 4), the Barents Pride in support of Russian LGBTI+ people organized annually by Norwegian and Russian activists in Norwegian Kirkenes since 2017 (Chapter 4), and the peace dialogue project with women from Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and Switzerland (Chapter 3).

Through the fieldwork within Russia, Olga foremost aspired to lift up the experience of LGBTI+ and feminist activists in various Russian regions.⁸ As it is frequently brought up by regional activists, the feminist and LGBTI+ activist scene in Russia spins around two of Russia's metropolitan cities—Moscow and St. Petersburg—where largest organizations and initiatives are concentrated. Regional activists frequently mention their invisibility on the Russian activist arena including donor politics. They also complain about the lack of knowledge about regional specificities among activists based in metropolitan cities. Olga visited and interviewed grassroots initiatives and organizations in the Russian South and West, Siberia, and Ural. Another intention was to look at small-scale, less institutionalized, and more recent initiatives and practices at the expense of well-known and well-established activists and organizations who, with some exceptions, were intentionally left outside the scope of this study.

In Moscow and St. Petersburg, Olga attended large- and small-scale activist events such as Forum for LGBT+ activists annually organized by The Russian LGBT Network in Moscow (2017), the annual Conference on LGBTQIAPP Families in Moscow (2018), the March 8 rally in 2019 in St. Petersburg (Chapter 5), and a number of conferences and activist

⁸Region is the generic designation of eighty-five constituent entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation. While formally Moscow and St. Petersburg are also regions, in the colloquial language "regions" designate the territories outside these two metropolitan cities. Several feminist groups in social networks use "regional" in their names to distinguish themselves from feminist groups in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

events on March 8, 2018, in Moscow. In 2020, due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, Olga attended several online events, including those dedicated to bridging the divide between regional and metropolitan feminist activism. She also interviewed several Moscow- and St. Petersburg-based organizations and initiatives.

Along with participant observations, the Russian material includes 25 in-depth individual and group interviews with individual activists and members of feminist and LGBTI+ initiatives, community centers, women's organizations, and transnational organizations working with feminist and LGBTI+ agenda in Russia and the post-Soviet space. Interviews took place in different cities and spaces—most often in cafes or organizations' offices, but sometimes in activists' private apartments or digitally. The relations with research partners vary—some connections established during the project resulted in further collaborations and professional friendships while others remained at the level of temporal interactions. Olga also volunteered as a translator and protocolist of a peace dialogue project (Chapter 3), and as a translator and a section moderator during the Fucking Solidarity conference in Vienna (Chapter 4).

Most material for the Russian case has been in Russian (with the exception of one interview in German and some fieldwork at transnational events in English). The interviews were transcribed verbatim. All quotes were translated from Russian to English by Olga Sasunkevich. We use the Library of Congress system for transliteration of some words and terms where the original usage is important.

Fieldwork in the Scandinavian Countries

Using a multi-scalar approach, fieldwork in the Scandinavian countries sought to trace transnational interactions and grasp broader formations of feminist and LGBTI+ practices on various levels, “below” as well as “beyond” the national realm (Marcus 1995). Feminist and LGBTI+ actors and activism were in focus of the ethnography, and the research material includes data from fieldwork conducted in various sites and

types of events within Norway, Denmark, and Sweden as well as outside of the Scandinavian countries and includes also material collected online.

Fieldwork in the Scandinavian countries begun in Spring 2017 with interviews and participant observation in Denmark, where Mia attended activities in several feminist and queer as well as queer feminist activist groups. In the fall of 2017, Mia took part in the conference *Across and in between* (*På tværs og imellem*), which was a one-day event located at Christiansborg, the Danish Parliament, aimed at raising awareness on the multiple forms of discrimination migrant LGBTI+ people are exposed to and to shape better conditions for this group in society broadly and in policy specifically. The event was arranged by Sabaah, an organization for LGBTI+ people of minority background. Participants at the event were Danish politicians, journalists, scholars, and members of Sabaah. In her later fieldwork, Mia participated in a great number of events, among them the workshop ABC of love with Queer World in Oslo, Barents Pride in Kirkenes, together with Olga, and the celebration of the International Women's Day 2018 in Gothenburg (Chapter 5). During fieldwork, Mia put a particular emphasis on gathering material among feminist and LGBTI+ communities who experience multiple forms of discrimination and express difficulties in receiving attention from state actors, news media, and funders, among them, migrant and asylum-seeking LGBTI+s, Muslim feminists and queers, feminists and queers of color, and Sami women and LGBTI+ people. Parts of the fieldwork in the Scandinavian context attend to the tensions that arise as a result of such power relations in civil society (see Chapter 3), while other parts focus on the solidarities and strengths experienced when diverse groups of feminists and LGBTI+ actors come together to struggle against such forms of exclusion and marginalization (see Chapters 4 and 5).

In Scandinavia, feminist and queer activism in regional contexts is vivid, and fieldwork data in this context was distributed on both smaller regional areas and larger cities like Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Malmö, Oslo, Stockholm, Kristiansand, Trondheim, and Tromsø. Our research participants recognized the larger cities, such as Oslo, Malmö, or Copenhagen, as important sites for pursuing activism, especially among LGBTI+ people with migrant background and asylum-seeking LGBTI+s. The capital city or a more multicultural city, like Malmö,

research participants argued, made it easier to find spots to socialize, to visit gay(-friendly) night clubs, cafés, and bars. While organizations such as Queer World (*Skeiv verden*) in Norway or Sabaah in Denmark also had regional or local offices in regional cities where they organized activities for the community on a weekly basis, in the capital city, larger and longer events were organized. In order to attend such events, participants traveled from the whole of the country.

In addition to participant observation in events, workshops, conferences, and meetings across three years (2017–2019) as well as online ethnography, following social media accounts of the groups, the material from the Scandinavian context includes 20 in-depth individual and group interviews with activists and members of feminist and LGBTI+ groups, local initiatives, national organizations as well as transnational organizations engaged in strengthening feminist or LGBTI+ issues in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the global North and South. Interviews were conducted in various places, from cafés, in offices, over the telephone, in the kitchen area of the organization, and in the home of activists. During events and at larger dinner festivities, Mia volunteered to assist in the kitchen. The relationships with research partners were diverse in character, from some exchanges having resulted in further collaborations and professional relations, and other interactions remaining more temporal. All encounters, however, have in significant ways contributed to deepen our understandings of structural conditions and everyday struggles of feminist and LGBTI+ activism within and beyond the Scandinavian region, and to shine a light on what transnational exchanges and non-normative geographies of connectivity can mean for feminist and LGBTI+ actors in this context, as the chapters of this book further illuminate.

The material for the Scandinavian case study came in different languages: English, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish; the language use during data collection was determined by the preference of our research partners. Mia transcribed the interview recordings word-for-word. Fieldwork diaries were written in English or Swedish. Quotes and fieldwork diary entries were translated by Mia Liinason from Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish to English.

Fieldwork in Turkey

In Turkey, Selin focused on activism in and around the Istanbul-based initiative Women Are Strong Together (*Kadınlar Birlikte Güçlü*, hereafter Strong Together) as a springboard to investigate the changing forms, agendas, and strategies of feminist and LGBTI+ struggles, alongside the shifts and transformations in their political environment, in a context where they faced marginalization and criminalization by the Turkish state. Strong Together is a still-in-the-making coalition of women involved in gender equality and sexual rights activism. Since its establishment in 2017, it became a significant platform where counterhegemonic feminist and queer struggles strategize about how to build solidarity across difference and resist the ruling party's anti-egalitarian gender and sexual politics from an intersectional point of view. Most actively participating in the initiative are women organized in feminist, left-socialist, and pro-Kurdish organizations. Yet, as a platform, Strong Together forms a network of women from various political belongings; including anarchist, Alevi, Muslim feminist, queer/LB* and trans, social democratic, and left Kemalist women as well as various kinds of organizations such as local women's platforms, women's shelters, NGOs, labor unions, and political parties; who become active during times of issue-based campaigns online and offline.

Among the various coalition-building initiatives that emerged in the 2010s in Turkey in response to the attacks on gender equality and sexual rights, Strong Together garnered the broadest alliance and the most inclusive agenda due to its diverse composition (Çağatay 2018b). This served as a good ground to study transnational influence and exchange between activists with different political, local/geopolitical, and identity belongings, but there were two specific points that motivated Selin's choice to take Strong Together as a springboard for the Turkish case study. First, as a feminist activist, Selin had pursued politics for more than a decade with several groups and activists that were now participating in Strong Together. Second, doing research with/on this initiative offered the possibility to include in research the experiences and perspectives of groups that are often overlooked in the literature on women's and feminist activism, namely young feminist and LGBTI+ activists who participate

in mix-gender organizing where they combine gender and sexual politics with class-based and/or pro-peace, pro-Kurdish, and pro-secular agendas.

A transnational research methodology proved suitable to study the activism in and around Strong Together since global campaigns such as *Ni Una Menos*, International Women's Strike, and #MeToo served as important sources of inspiration for Strong Together activists in relation to coalition-building at home and solidarity-building abroad. Strong Together constituents organized solidarity campaigns with the White Wednesdays movement in Iran and Kurdish women who took part in the Rojava revolution, and established ties with feminists in Poland, Spain, Argentina, Chile, and Switzerland. Moreover, Strong Together's efforts to connect, relate, and unite small-scale, local struggles for gender equality and sexual rights during the time of Selin's research sparked many conversations about feminist and queer struggles on the sub-national scale and the relationship between national and sub-national levels of activism. These conversations brought to light the differential agendas of women based on geopolitical location beyond the nationally salient axes of differentiation based on secularism-Islam and Turkish-Kurdish identities, and provided an appropriate ground to discuss gender and sexual politics from a multi-scalar point of view.

Between October 2018 and March 2020, Selin conducted participatory action research (PAR), field and digital ethnography, and in-depth interviews with feminist and LGBTI+ activists connected to Strong Together. PAR took place in Istanbul and online as Selin actively participated in Strong Together organizing numerous campaigns, events, and public protests. Some events she co-organized are featured in this book, such as the 2019 Turkey Women's Gathering in Istanbul (Chapter 4) and the 2019 Feminist Night March on March 8 (Chapter 5). PAR was combined with field and online ethnography of women's, feminist, and LGBTI+ activisms by attending internal group meetings, seminars, public events and demonstrations, and following websites, social media accounts, listservs, and groups on messenger apps of activist formations. In addition, from March to November 2019, Selin conducted

49 in-depth interviews in Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakır (Amed),⁹ İzmir, Bodrum, Mersin, Adana, and Antakya. In choosing these locations, Selin's concern was to include in her research metropolitan and provincial activist experiences and perspectives simultaneously. Stretching across five out of the seven regions in Turkey, these locations offered a vital opportunity to tackle women's differential, geopolitical agendas and how center—periphery relations served as a source of tension in activism. Interviews took place in various places including activists' homes and workplaces, public parks and cafés, and political spaces such as feminist and LGBTI+ organizations and party or union buildings.

The digital and print material gathered for this study was in Turkish and English. Selin conducted interviews and held a fieldwork diary in Turkish. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by two people: one of them a research participant herself, the other an activist from the extended network of Strong Together. Direct quotes from activists featured in the book were translated from Turkish to English Selin Çağatay.

Positionality and Ethical Concerns

Emphasizing our collective knowledge production process and the dialogic methodology we follow, we write as “we” except when we refer to our individual experiences and reflections. Due to the differences in contexts, the profile of our research partners, and the methods we employed, however, we had different positionalities and our respective

⁹Kurdish feminists who participated in this study belonged to the Kurdish liberation movement exclusively. During interviews with these participants, Selin referred to the Kurdish-majority southeast Turkey as part of greater Kurdistan and the major cities in this territory by their Kurdish names, i.e., Amed instead of Diyarbakır and Dersim instead of Tunceli. The latter names, Diyarbakır (1937) and Tunceli (1935), were given by the Turkish state as part of its politics of assimilation and Turkification. In this book, we use Diyarbakır instead of Amed since this is the official and internationally recognized name of the Kurdish-majority metropole. For the relationship between Kurds and the Turkish state see Yadirgi (2017). For scholarly considerations over Kurdistan as both geographical territory and matter of political struggle see Kaya (2020) and O'Shea (2004).

research required different ethical considerations. Bridging the activist-academic divide by understanding activism and academia as “mutually constitutive and permeable constructs” and not as separate worlds (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 9; see also Eschle and Maiguashca 2006) has been a common concern for us, but due to our different positionalities and the diverse histories of institutionalization of gender research, we pursued different paths when problematizing the activism-academia relationship in our respective contexts. Yet, motivating future researchers for doing collaborative work across activism and academia has been one of our common aspirations when writing this book. This, we believe, is needed in a world where the livabilities of feminist and queer activists and academics are similarly shaped by neoliberal conditions as well as anti-gender mobilizations that threaten the prospect of gender equality and sexual rights.

In the Turkish study, Selin’s involvement as a feminist activist in a number of initiatives over many years made it possible for her to pursue participatory action research and to involve her fellow activists as research participants “in all stages of research including research design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of findings” (Sullivan et al. 2005, 978; see also Banerjee 2018; Cahill 2007; Mojab 2009; Nagar and Ali 2003; Reid and Gillberg 2014). During interviews, Selin debated with activists the findings of her research as well as how differences in power and privilege shape research relationships, which enabled collective knowledge production as well as the incorporation of conflicting views and disagreements into research findings. Activists who participated in this study have their names anonymized, but the original names of organizations are provided with a concern over making visible of the small-scale, informal initiatives or “peripheral” organizations and activists (e.g., left-feminist section of a political party or a queer feminist member of a labor union) that are often overlooked in the literature on feminist and queer struggles.

In the case of Russia, Olga’s positionality was of an internal outsider (Narayan 1993). As a Russian-speaking feminist academic with relations to feminist and LGBTI+ activism in neighboring Belarus, Olga collaborated with gender scholars and feminists from Russia long before she started the project (Cope et al. 2017). Yet, she felt as an outsider to the

Russian feminist and LGBTI+ activist scene where she did not have a first-hand experience prior this study. However, Olga's situatedness in post-Soviet feminist struggles made it possible for her to relate to activist experiences in Russia. In spite of her professional employment in Swedish academia at the time of the research, her Belarusianness, the subaltern position in relation to the imperial legacy of Russia,¹⁰ leveled the power disbalance between a researcher and a researched subject (this is further problematized in Chapter 4). Moreover, many Russian activists and their transnational partners had an academic background or education in the fields related to gender studies. Therefore, many interviews provided a space for discussing Olga's preliminary conclusions and assumptions and for clarification of her theoretical standpoints. While writing this book, Olga also discussed some of her examples with research partners and in all such cases research partners unreservedly supported her line of argument and representation of their experience. Olga decided to anonymize most names, organizations and even locations (except for Moscow and St. Petersburg or public events) of her research partners for ethical and security reasons to avoid compromising activists by sharing their critique of other activists' practices or by exposing their transnational collaborations including the sources of funding, which can have legal consequences for organizations and individual activists in Russia.

Being based in Sweden and as a researcher involved in feminist and LGBTI+ struggles in this context, Mia's fieldwork in the Scandinavian countries took its starting point in the transnational networks of feminist and LGBTI+ organizing across national borders in the Nordic region. Her position in relation to the geopolitical contexts of the Scandinavian countries was looking "both from the outside in and from the inside out" (hooks 1984: vii), focusing her attention on the center as well as on the margins. Informed both by her structural social position and her social positioning (Anthias 2008), situated in critical race and queer knowledges (Shinozaki 2012), Mia was involved in conversation with research partners about the tensions that shaped the limits and possibilities for cross-border engagements in struggles for feminist, people of color, trans

¹⁰The territories of contemporary Belarus were part of the Russian Empire until 1917. On the specificity of Russian coloniality see Tlostanova (2012); on the subalternity of Belarus in relation to Russia see Morozov (2015).

and queer lives and livabilities in Scandinavia. The names of individual activists included in the Scandinavian case study of this research are kept confidential, by the use of a pseudonym instead of the real names. The included organizations, however, appear in the book by their real name, decided in agreement with the activists involved.

Chapter Outline

In the next chapter, we engage with theoretical perspectives that inform our empirical work in the following chapters; Chapter 2 lays out how we understand resistance and situate it in space from a multi-scalar transnational perspective. We provide our positionality in relation to debates in feminist scholarship around activism and state–civil society relations, transnational solidarities, and embodied practices of resistance beyond the visibility–invisibility dichotomy. Focusing on feminist and queer struggles within the ongoing neoconservative turn and current conditions of neoliberalism, in Chapter 3, we trace how feminist and LGBTI+ activists navigate hegemonic relations at the intersections between the state, civil society, transnational actors, and the market. Here, we look at the relations between activists and state in the contexts of study, explore the distinct historical landscapes within which contemporary activism in Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries is embedded, and follow the diverse trajectories of organizing in light of transnational collaboration. Directing our attention to practices of solidarity across borders, Chapter 4 examines practices of community- and coalition-building situated in imagined and concrete relationships on multiple scales and life fields, and across diverse borders and belongings. We engage with a variety of material from feminist and LGBTI+ activism to expose the embodied and affective processes involved in community- and coalition-building within and across local, national, regional, and global levels. Next, Chapter 5 focuses on the significance of embodied forms of resistance for the (re)making of space through the lens of March 8. Based on an analyses of multi-sited ethnography on the International Women's Day in Russian, Turkish, and Scandinavian contexts, this chapter examines the distinct and overlapping ways in which bodily assemblies take

shape in public space and brings together questions discussed in previous chapters, as we recognize and seek to illuminate the long genealogies in struggles for feminist and sexual rights, and highlight the new dimensions brought to these genealogies by today's actors. Chapter 6 provides a summary of our findings in empirical chapters and their implications for researching transnationalizing feminist and LGBTI+ activisms. As we conclude the book, we also pick up and reflect further on some of the discussions we initiated in this chapter regarding feminist and queer struggles.

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