



IN THIS EDITION, WE INVITE YOU TO A RHIZOMATIC CONVERSATION REFLECTING INTERSECTIONALITY, ENVISIONING POSSIBLE FUTURES, POTENTIAL UTOPIAS, NOSTALGIA, FEARS AND APOCALYPSE, BIOPOLITICS, CYBORGS, RELATIONSHIPS OF BELONGING AND DISBELONGING, SPACES AND BODIES BORN TOMORROW AND YESTERDAY AND RIGHT NOW.

WE CONTEMPLATE REIMAGINED PASTS ACCORDING TO FICTIVE AND REIMAGINED FUTURES. BREAKING TIMELINES - CREATING "UNEXPECTED" (DIS)CONNECTIONS BETWEEN (NON)RELATED INCIDENTS, BETWEEN WHAT IS (NOT) AND WHAT WAS (NOT) AND WHAT COULD BE, SEEKING TO USE, ADD AND STRENGTHEN WORDS, THOUGHT, IMAGINATION, AND PRACTICE IN AN EVER-GROWING VOCABULARY.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE FUTURE IS NOT A STATIC CONCEPT. IS IT TIME FOR A "QUEER APOCALYPSE" - WHERE TIME MOVES FORWARDS, BACKWARDS, AND SIDEWARDS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND FLEXIBLY?

"IT IS PROCESSES OF TRANSITION THAT BEST ALLOW US TO UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL SHIFT WITH WHICH WE ARE CONFRONTED WORLDWIDE. SEX CHANGE AND MIGRATION ARE TWO PRACTICES (...) CALLING INTO QUESTION THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL ARCHITECTURE OF PATRIARCHAL COLONIALISM, OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND RACIAL HIERARCHY, OF FAMILY AND NATION-STATE, [WHICH] PLACE A LIVING

HUMAN BODY INSIDE THE LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP, EVEN OF WHAT WE UNDERSTAND BY 'HUMANITY'. BEYOND THE GEOGRAPHICAL, LINGUISTIC, OR CORPOREAL MOVEMENTS WHICH CHARACTERIZE BOTH JOURNEYS, IT IS THE RADICAL TRANSFORMATION NOT JUST OF THE TRAVELER, BUT ALSO OF THE HUMAN COMMUNITY THAT WELCOMES OR REJECTS THE TRAVELER. THE ANCIENT RÉGIME (POLITICAL, SEXUAL, RACIAL) CRIMINALIZES ALL PRACTICES OF THE CROSSING. BUT WHENEVER THE PASSAGE IS POSSIBLE, THE MAP OF A NEW SOCIETY BEGINS TO BE OUTLINED, WITH NEW FORMS OF PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF LIFE."<sup>[1]</sup>

FINDING A PASSAGEWAY IN THE 'GLITCH' "WE WANT WILD, AMOROUS, MONSTROUS BODIES. THROUGH OUR PRESENCE AS A GLITCH, WE WANT TO STAND BEFORE, WITHIN, AND OUTSIDE OF BROKENNESS. THE BREAK AN ERROR, THE ERROR A PASSAGEWAY."<sup>[2]</sup>

EACH CONTRIBUTION APPROACHES SPECULATION FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, CREATING AND REMIXING CONVERSATIONS, HOLDING TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS AND EXPLORING POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON 'WHAT WAS' AND HOPEFUL THOUGHTS ON 'WHAT COULD BE'.

<sup>[1]</sup> Paul B. Preciado - "An Apartment On Uranus"

<sup>[2]</sup> Legacy Russell - "Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto"

# Imprint

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# A Little Was Left, And Now That Is Gone Too

Erkan Affan and Tunay Altay

interview with  
Leman Sevda Darıcıoğlu  
Kübra Uzun

“A little was left, and now that is gone too” (azıcık vardı, o da gitti şimdi) says my aunt, as she watches the news from Turkey in our flat in south London. I look up from my phone to see what she’s talking about and notice the bright flashing banners at the bottom of the screen: “President Erdoğan has pulled Turkey out of the Istanbul Convention”. The atmosphere in the living room has changed, but by this point my mother, aunt and I are prepared for such a sudden drop in our moods when watching the news. No longer do we feel the hot fire of disbelief or outrage in our stomachs, but rather the dull pain of grief.

Every day, people in Turkey and its diaspora are faced with yet another report of femicide in the country; another exposure of institutional corruption; a (non-isolated) incident of ethno-nationalistic and sectarian violence; of avoidable infrastructural and environmental catastrophe. Chaos has become the norm, and the international community’s apathy to it has become a benchmark of continued oppression. For many of us from Turkey, the nullification of the Istanbul Convention is yet another watershed moment in the country’s darkening history – individuals are no longer safeguarded by an international charter that protects them against gender-based violence. Is it any wonder that my aunt says a little was left, but now that is gone too?



*As a queer person from Turkey raised in the diaspora, I have a strong affinity and connection to these socio-political developments. But I have an even stronger recognition for the need to amplify voices in the country and its diaspora who have been resisting against the government's crusade of conservatism for a long time. Two individuals who form a big part of the constellation of voices in my surroundings are Istanbul-based Kübra Uzun, and now Berlin-based Leman Sevda Darıcioğlu. They are both active and intrinsic pillars of Turkey's queer artistic community. Here, I invite both Kübra and Leman below to provide with some more context on the current state of political affairs in Turkey. In this piece, the activists elaborate on their own artistic practices and embodiments that exist in defiance of such affairs. They'll provide their insights into the Istanbul Convention's recent nullification and discuss what its consequences withh really look like for Turkey's queer and trans communities. To wrap up this piece, I further invite a good friend and collaborator of myself, Kübra and Leman – namely, Tunay Altay – to weigh in on what he may see for the future of Turkey. Is the prospect of finding peace and accountability within the country and its diaspora a conceivable possibility in our future? Let's explore.*

*Tell me a little bit about yourselves – Who you are, where you're based, and what you do?*

Kübra (she/her, they/them) I am a 41-year-old queer, non-binary-trans LGBTQIA+ rights activist, singer, performer, songwriter, and DJ based and living in Istanbul. I am tall, bold, brunette with brown eyes, a proud breast owner in C cup size. I am mostly energetic, shining, extroverted and easy to communicate with.

Leman (they/them) I've been based in Berlin for 1,5 years and I am an artist who is not trained in art school but in Istanbul's queer activism and community of 2000s. I am interested with time-and-space-based practices such as performance art, video, installation, and public intervention. My work is always related to the politics, dynamics and rhythms of time and space, as my body finds its context and meaning depending on them. I can describe my practice as mainly creating corporal images of my urgencies coming from dealing with hegemonic political and societal concepts, and opening these corporal live images to lose my control on them through long-durational performances (shortest 5–6 hours). Previously, I created more ritualistic works, pursuing an investigation on physical pain, the endurance limits of the body, and the effects of corporal restrictions with body-damaging materials etc. Since the last two years, I started to engage with an approach that we can interpret as creating living-sculpture, “tableau vivant” images with the body to dig into the potentials and limitations of living as a body.

I take the body as a research area of physical and emotional limits, boundaries, and a resource to unravel; a substance connecting myself with the space, time, and its ghosts. Since I moved to Berlin, my main topics have been South-Eastern queer migrant image in European society and the politics around immigration, alongside topics such as grief, mourning, loss, exclusion/rejection, queer temporality, intimacy, and utopia. Questioning the meaning of my body within its new context has driven me to think of my heritage as a queer artist from Turkey, and from there, I have found other connections both with my non-blood-tied queer ancestors and my blood-tied Armenian, Anatolian elders.

*How do you perceive the current situation for the LGBTQIA+ community in the Republic of Turkey?*

Kübra Well, covered with phobia and hate speech, we are trying to survive and are resisting in every minute of each day in the 'Republic' of Turkey.

Leman Well, we all know that it is not going well neither in general nor for the queer community in Turkey. LGBTQIA+ movements in Turkey have gained a lot of visibility and reputation due to their constant resistance since the 90s, and I think that queer involvement in the riots during the Gezi Protests brought recognition and visibility not only in intellectual, artistic, creative or alternative scenes but also in the middle-class spheres in general. Meanwhile, the other side of this coin has been the presence of more targeting and more hatred. The government started restraining more, to 'bring it under control' by waging war on every political context, community and person who supported Gezi. In that time, Istanbul LGBTQIA+ Pride March was one of the rare marches that could happen in the city, but not because they were supporting LGBTQIA+ rights (on the contrary, they were performing a great denial despite more than seventy thousand people joining the Pride March during the last time it officially took place in 2014). From my perspective, LGBTQIA+ movements standing with Kurdish movement and HDP's (People's Democratic Party – a pro-minority, left-wing and intersectional party in Turkey) success during the June 7th election in 2015 changed this attitude. In 2015, the Istanbul LGBTQIA+ Pride March was violently attacked by the police and there was a subsequent declaration of war against the queer community. Day by day, their homo/trans-phobic statements have increased and become more and more severe. Recently, in 2021, queers have been active in the protests against Melih Bulu, whom the government unlawfully appointed as the rector of Boğaziçi University, and hatred over these protests has driven the government to announce the rainbow flag as a terrorist symbol. But these policies and statements are not only coming after the queer community's political engagement, but also our very existence. For example, in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the religious affairs administrator declared in his Ramadan month speech that LGBTQIA+ people are the "cause behind the pandemic".

*Leman, How do you position yourself as an artist raised in Turkey, and currently based in Berlin? How do audiences react to your work in the latter context?*

Unfortunately for now, the only thing I can see is that they are cultivating more and more hate in society towards queers. But at the same time, we should also mention that despite all the oppression and violence, the queer community in Turkey is growing, becoming more and more visible, resilient, and are making some amazing works in the art and music scenes.

Leman I think that this question doesn't have an easy answer, at least my feelings are complicated. Sometimes, I find myself obliged to talk about the current government and politics of Turkey, even when the work I am showing has nothing to do with it. In my work, there are some traces of Turkey's history from the perspective of minorities, as well as traces of the queer community, culture, and politics with which I grew up with. But none of these are meant to be taken as only related to actual politics, or if I say more specifically, to Erdoğan. I don't mean that we shouldn't be talking about what is happening in Turkey, but most of the conversations are generally so narrowed by mentioning his name that there is no room for much else. There is a thin line between talking about countries under authoritarian regimes to point out the violent situations that people are facing in a solidarity way, and victimising people living under such violence with. Especially when talking from the point of view of the diaspora in the West, this victimising attitude regularly turns into a comparative appreciation of the West that is quite irritating because it ignores the racism, xenophobia, orientalism, hate and millions of other such problematic policies that exist in the West. Navigating myself and my work within awareness about this to break down victimisation and the fetishization of South-Eastern subjects is thus super important for me.

In other parts, as we know, global history and knowledge is dominated by the West in which I partially take part as someone from Turkey (because of Turkey's geographical and political positioning of 'in-between the West & East' since the establishment of Republic of Turkey). This state of in-betweenness, which is to me the main characteristic of Turkey, lends complexity to the coun-

try. Even though you can never control how people would interpret your work, I sometimes feel that this complexity brings another level of necessity to state my references more properly.

Kübra Being LGBTQIA+ comes with resistance, activism, and pride by its nature. I am and I must be political, especially in a country like Turkey where we live with phobias raining down on us on a daily basis. My existence is my activism. As a performer and LGBTQIA+ rights activist, I write songs, create, coordinate and/or execute projects for the community to strengthen solidarity and resistance. Being a keystone in the community, proudly, makes me feel alive. I live with the feeling of 'I need to do this and that, create something for my community and for myself', and shine together. For instance, ALAN2020, the song I wrote the lyrics for and produced with Mx. Sür became an anthem of Istanbul Pride; or the ongoing "Through The Window" online project, which aims to gather Turkey-and-Netherlands based queer artists Ömer Tefrik Erten and Simon(e) van Saarloos.

Leman I think apart from what I had already said to the previous questions above, it would be more appropriate that I leave this part to Kübra as I no longer live in Turkey.

Kübra The separation of powers, which is the basic principle of democracy (a state management model in which the legislative, executive, and judiciary organs of the state are separated from each other) was disabled with Turkey's transition to the Presidential Government System in 2017. The subsequent restrictions of the power of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the increase in the powers of the president made Erdoğan the head of the executive branch. The People's Alliance (involving the Justice and Development Party, AKP, headed by the

*Kübra, how do you position yourself as an artist raised and based in Turkey?*

*Let's talk about Istanbul Pride and the events that occurred this year. A vegan picnic was attacked by the police; official statements of city councils were released banning marches; and many in Turkey's cities watched as LGBTQIA+ communities were disproportionately targeted. Can you give us an insight into why and how this happened?*

president, and the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP) and its subsequent components (pro-biased media and religious congregations) contributed to the increase in hate speech targeting the LGBTQIA+ community, especially since the beginning of this year. Naturally, this increasing number of hate speech and targeting, generally referring to minorities such as Kurds, Syrian and Afghan refugees and LGBTQIA+, polarize our society more and more. The Istanbul LGBT+ Pride Parade, which was held for the first time in 2003, faced a significant obstacle at the hands of the Istanbul Governor's Office on 28 June 2015. As the parade coincided with the month of Ramadan, the police banned the entrance to Istiklal Street where the march usually took place and used pressurized water, pepper spray, and rubber bullets to disperse those who attended. Police intervention resulted in two injuries and one person was taken into custody. The 14th Pride Parade, which was planned to be held on June 26, 2016, was not allowed, with a statement shared by the Istanbul Governor's Office and the consequent intervention by the police of the Trans Pride Parade that took place the previous week. As a result of these developments, since 2015 the Istanbul LGBT+ Pride Parade cannot be held, especially with the transition to the Presidential Government System that legitimized disproportionate police force exerted by law enforcements.

We see the effect of this ongoing hate speech and targeting yearly, with the violation of human rights that continue to occur as a natural result of this change. Society's polarisation in today's Turkey has meant that every oppositional voice is declared a terrorist, and earlier this year the police forces attacked the vegan picnic held in Maçka Park on 22 June of this year. Pride parades still cannot be held...

However, we are not afraid. We won't give up! We say that this is our resistance, the streets are ours, so get used to it - we are everywhere! We won't back down!

*Do you believe that there is an increased level of violence against the LGBTQIA+ community this year - such as during Pride week - due to the powerful right-wing lobbyists in Parliament that tried to link queerness to the nullification of the Istanbul Convention?*

Kübra I TRULY(!) believe so.

Leman Of course. All these breed each other, such as every unpunished hate murder encouraging manifestations of further hate and violence; or every official phobic speech being an incentive for further hate crimes. We should also mention that it is not only about the nullification of the Istanbul Convention. What I heard from my friends living there is that the level of violence has increased a lot after, for example the declaration of the religious affairs administrator. I would say that it has even influenced the diaspora from Turkey living in Berlin. There has always been a big conservative population in Turkey, and we all know that this has been intensified so much during the AKP's governing. It's the leading country for trans murders across Europe, and the 12th in the world. All the official speeches, all statements full of hate, exclusion and violence are carrying this responsibility. And now, they have declared war against the community

Leman Not only in Turkey but everywhere, queer and feminist movements are acting together as it is obvious that we need to stand together against the heteropatriarchy, the gender binary, misogyny, homo/trans-phobia etc. There is no other way than coming together, neither queer nor women's rights can exist separately from each other (whilst saying this, I am of course not forgetting TERFs, but I simply do not count them as feminists).

If we talk about Turkey, we need to talk about femicide. Hundreds of women are being killed every year. We hear about several different women being killed in different places by different men on the same day. We have never known the real numbers when it comes to LGBTQIA+ murders as we are unable really to talk about it visibly – but by being a member of the community, we are all familiar with violence. I have luckily never lost a friend because of hate, but I have friends, especially trans women engaging in sex work, who have lost around one-to-two hundred friends during their lifetime. It's not because they are some-hundred years old and have been around for long, they are in their 40s and 50s – it's because of the growing

hate and phobic crimes that are almost rewarded by the state. I think we can all imagine how all these factors could be affected by the Convention's nullification.

Kübra Turkey has been governed by the Islamist alliance of the centre-right since 2002. Considering the relationship between the congregation and the state, which is getting stronger day by day, and that a significant part of the decisions taken by the government arise from this relationship spiral, it is not difficult to comprehend why Turkey was the first country to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. The decision was taken in 2021 by the government of Turkey, which was the first one to sign the Convention in 2014.

In his article written on May 17, 2020 for the Milli Gazete, Mehmet Bayraktutar, the Chairman of Diyanet-Sen (Union of Turkish Religious Affairs and Foundation Employees), emphasizes that the Istanbul Convention contains “certain measures that would dynamite the social structure and are diametrically opposed to the structure of Turkish society, its religious beliefs, customs, and traditions”. Bayraktutar continues: “Gender is based on the idea that femininity and masculinity are socially constructed. It is this concept of gender that is at the centre of the Istanbul Convention. While the text devalues the social role expectations determined by the cultural values that sustain a society, it is almost prepared to meet the expectations of marginal groups such as LGBT”. Prof. Dr. Muttalip Kutluk Özgüven made scandalous statements in a television program he participated in on May 18, 2020, where he endorsed that the age of 12 is the most suitable time for fertility. In addition to this and similar articles and news in the pro-government media, in 2021 we frequently witnessed similar discourses and targets from the 'square ace' of the People's Alliance, the head of the MHP party Devlet Bahçeli, and the head of the Presidency of Communications Fahrettin Altun. In a post on his Twitter account in February 2021, Minister of Interior Süleyman Soyulu said, "Constituting a protection shield for terrorist organizations and deviant LGBT, Twitter is trying to disrupt the chemistry of countries, the chemistry of democracy, and the chemistry of peace by means of the communication monopoly it has seized. This toy of imperialism must not seize humanity".

*How are the struggles of women's rights and the wider LGBTQIA+ community linked together within the context of Turkish politics? Has this been exacerbated by the nullification of the Istanbul Convention?*



Just last week, after Turkey Women's National Volleyball Team defeated China 3-0, theologian İhsan Şenocak tweeted that the "woman's place is not in the playfields". Turkey ranks first in Europe for violence against women. The number of femicides in Turkey increased significantly in the 2000s compared to previous years. In 2019, 474 women were killed, making it the year in which the most women were killed in the country in the last 10 years. According to the annual report of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, 300 women were killed by men in 2020, and 171 women were found suspiciously dead. The number of femicides decreased only in 2011, the year the Istanbul Convention was signed. The examples I gave above, hopefully, shed enough light on how important the Istanbul Convention is and how dull, banal, and violence-provoking the reasons for its termination stated by the government and its constituents are.

Leman During my time in activism in Turkey, we used to organise many street occupations as well as endless press statements, performative demos, and parties. Until the Gezi Protests, at least. For now, I want to say that creativity and solidarity seem to be the main resistance tools and manners of the queer community in Turkey. And from here, again I give the floor to Kübra as she is still living there and taking an active part in the creative, artistic scene.

Kübra Well, all I can say is we've learned how to meditate ourselves (no sarcasm). Performative activism has had a wider involvement on the digital realm since the start of Covid. Let me give you some examples of those fields, which exist and act as manners of resistance:

When all the clubs are closed (such as Anahit Sahne, Bigudi Club etc), Club CoWeed has started an online party series, hosted on their Zoom account in 2020. 'queerwaves' has started a Gofundme campaign to support queer nightlife workers (DJs, performers etc.) in Istanbul in 2020. [alt]cut, premiered by Koli Kanonu, has become an online field for queer performers. As an online project that aims to gather Turkey-and-Netherlands based queer artists -

*What are some of the manners of resistance that you've noticed among the community against the increasing oppression of Turkey's LGBTQIA+ population?*

*Do you believe that there is enough international awareness of/solidarity for the situation the LGBTQIA+ community in Turkey faces?*

*Thank you both so much for giving your time to inform readers on what is happening in Turkey. To end off this interview, I want to ask you both, are there any upcoming plans and future projects you'd like to mention?*

supported by Consulate General of The Netherlands - Through The Window Project (TTW) started in 2020 and just completed its second phase. TTW became a digital field for queer artists, DJs, thinkers, and performers.

Leman Sadly, not at all. Generally what I see is that speaking about Turkey has become limited to mentioning Erdoğan's name and pitying queers under his regime. Even in Berlin, which is one of the most radical (maybe even the most radical one after Athens) European cities in terms of people being interested with politics - and which also has a big BIPOC population (with a considerable percentage of Turkey's diaspora) - I can't say that I feel neither a solidarist space nor an interest in general about what it is really going.

In fact, what we hear, talk, and discuss in the so called 'international queer community' is generally about what is going on in the West. Hopefully BIPOC people and the decolonial movement will gradually help change this Western-centrism - but the path is so long and there are endless changes that need to be should made.

Kübra I'd love to thank you Erkan and the awḥām team for this opportunity and the wonderful questions. You'll be seeing me as a digital performer in Anna Fries's *VIRTUAL WOMBS*, which will premier in September at HAU Berlin. As for other plans in the near future, we are working on the film version of 'A Trans History Sung', with more information on that soon. Lastly, we are looking for a source of funding/support to run the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of "Through The Window Project" - I am optimistic that we will find it soon!

Leman It's been a pleasure to talk with you Erkan, thank you. In November, I will show my work *White Roses, Pink Glitter* as a 6 hour long live performance at Schwules Museum. There will be also a guest

artist, Anthony Hüseyin, accompanying me with their voice. It will be my first time bringing together corporal and vocal presences and I am really excited about it. Along with the live performance, the project includes two video performances for 6 hours.

Furthermore, we are in contact with some organizers/curators from Amsterdam to make a long durational piece in the city in the last quarter of November as part of a 24 hour long performance event, and there will be another long durational performance, possibly for several days, in Amsterdam curated by Naz Kocadere around March/April 2022.

Lastly, my video work *The Visit* which is about the first well known HIV+ person in Turkey, Mur-taza Elgin, is displayed in Schwules Museum 10 January 2022 as part of the exhibition *arcHIV: a search for traces* curated by Maria Bormuth, Eugen Januschke, Heiko Pollmeier, Heiner Schulze and Todd Sekuler.

A country facing a crisis of democracy, a crisis of human rights, an economic crisis, an environmental crisis, a crisis that is ever so present that it's hopeless urgency ignites feelings of outrage, guilt, disbelief, despair, and even resentment. But is there any hope left?

AKP has long been the party that claimed to represent the "people's will" against the political elites, Kemalists, çapulcus, activists, queers, feminists, Kurds, imperialists, and so on. Over its populist trajectory, the AKP government invested heavily into the discourse that Turkey is the country of pious Sunni Muslims who are exclusively represented by the AKP government and President Erdoğan alone. Over the years, this view not only disregarded the ethnic, religious, and ideological heterogeneities of Turkey, but also incited racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and hate crimes. For those who are somewhat connected to Turkey, the past years felt as if Turkey had become a society that is divided in two incompatible ideological camps; both haunted by

*So, Tunay, I invite you to take over the end of this piece and conclude it for our readers. With the above contributions in question, how can we make sense of both today's Turkey, and that of tomorrow's? Is there hope left?*

the ghost of a nostalgic Kemalist past and a future that can hardly be imagined.

Really, though, is a peaceful Turkey with conservative Muslims, Kurds, Alevites, Christians, LGBTQIA+ people, Armenians, feminists, anarchists, Afghans, and Syrians, with all our differences in political demands and histories, imaginable? While asking this question, I am reading Leman's and Kübra's insightful comments and Erkan's introduction. As a queer person deeply connected with Turkey's matters, the grief that Erkan describes is familiar to me. Similar to Leman, I was turned off countless times by the patronizing tone of Turkey-watchers, imposing an oppressor-oppressed paradigm while reducing Turkey to the wrong-doings of the AKP government. Yet despite increasing AKP-incited homophobia, transphobia, and racism, I see an emergence of public hope, built within and beyond the infrastructures of global social rights movements and the histories of resistance, resilience, and reaction of Turkey's LGBTQIA+ community. I sense this hope in Kübra's words; – hope for accountability, hope for democratic practices, hope for a better life for LGBTQIA+ people in Turkey. With growing queer performance groups and LGBTQIA+ nightlife collectives, we can see that Turkey's LGBTQIA+ people create possibilities for queer-expressive counter publics that are a source of hope.