Neoliberal Burdens for Women in Academy: 'How Dare We Not Work'

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss the potential of digital storytelling as a site where feminist scholars in academia can get together to reflect upon their concerns about neoliberal burdens in academia. I rely on the recent literature about the feminist interventions in higher education in addition to giving an account of the grass-roots digital storytelling movement around the world and its feminism oriented journey in Turkey. Focusing on the digital stories told at the pre-conference digital storytelling workshop in EMU (Eastern Mediterranean University) immediately before the 5th International Conference on Gender Studies in March 2015, the aim of that digital storytelling workshop was not only to facilitate the creation of digital stories told by feminist academics but also to carry these digital stories into the program of the conference in a special session that hosted both the screening of these digital stories and an open discussion about our neoliberal concerns in academia and everyday life. This article also provides an account of the main discussions and attempts to suggest the digital storytelling workshop as a tool for broadening the interactions between academic and activist feminisms.

Keywords: digital storytelling, neoliberal academy, feminist perspective, fear.

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Akademideki Kadınların Neoliberal Sıkıntıları: 'Olur Mu Hiç Çalışmamak'

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Öz

Bu makale, dijital hikaye anlatımının akademide karşılaşılan neoliberal söylemlere dair kaygılarını dile getirebilmesini sağlayan ortamı sunma potansiyelini tartışmaktadır. Yüksek öğretimde neoliberal söylemlere feminist müdahaleleri içeren okumalara dayanarak ve bunlarla dijital hikaye anlatımının taban hareketleri kökenli seyri içinde, Türkiye'deki uygulamanın feminist zemininden hareket ediyorum. Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nde 5. Uluslararası Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları Konferansı öncesinde bir konferans ön etkinliği olarak 2015 Mart ayında gerçekleştirdiğimiz bu dijital hikaye anlatımı atölyesi ile akademide feminist perspektifleri ile konumlanmış akademisyen kadınların hikayelerini yaratmalarını sağlamanın yanı sıra konferans programına yerleştirilen özel gösterim seansı ile bu dijital hikayeler üstünden bir tartışma açmayı hedefliyorum. Bu makale, dijital hikaye anlatımının akademide ve akademi dışı örgütlenmeler içinde konumlanan feminizmlerin buluşmalarını arttıracak bir potansiyele sahip olduğuna dair bir iddia geliştirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dijital hikaye anlatımı, neoliberal akademi, feminist perspektif, korku.

Introduction

My intention of using digital storytelling for feminist agendas dates to my PhD research that aimed to discover whether digital storytelling could be used as a change agent for women's participation in Turkey through my fieldwork with the Amargi Women's Academy, which was a non-governmental feminist organization, between 2009-2012. My primary concern during that period of research was not focusing on only digital stories as an outcome but the digital storytelling workshop process as a site for collaboration and solidarity for women, sharing their own concerns in their own words (Şimşek, 2012a). There, I suggest that the story circle phase of a digital storytelling workshop could possibly overlap with the well-known consciousness-raising meetings of the second-wave women's movement. The significance of the consciousness-raising meetings for feminists has been its nature of equal turns and sharing of one's own concerns in an environment where they are listened to and told in equal turns. "Private is political" has been the motto from the time where feminists have made a strong statement about the inclusion of issues such as birth rights, domestic violence and domestic labour that have been left to the premises of the home, not to politics. Getting its stimulation from the social movements, particularly the second wave feminism, the emergence of the Women's Studies centers and departments marked the 1990s. The existence of such Women's Studies centers and especially master's programs have provided the ground for discussions in the academia as well, as the feminist scholars have been activists themselves for a long time and these programs and centers always had strong connections with the social movements. For sure, in focusing the inequalities that women face in societies, these programs have been the home for discussions about academia and the inequalities women face in its male dominant structures.

In this article, my aim is to widen the discussion about the burdens that women face in neoliberal academy through the digital stories that were told in the digital storytelling workshop called, *How dare we not work* [Olur mu hiç çalışmamak] in March 2015, in the Eastern Mediterranean University, facilitated in cooperation with the Center for Women Studies. This paper is formed of three main sections followed by the conclusion. First, I have a very brief overview about the feminist interventions in higher education. Second, I provide an overview about the feminist agendas and the possible digital storytelling connections that we attempt to set in our Digital Storytelling Unit at Hacettepe University. In the third section, focusing on *How Dare We Not Work* Digital Storytelling Workshop[1] and the screening session that took place in the scope of *The 5th International Conference on Gender Studies: Neoliberal Discourse and Gender Equality*[2] right after the workshop. I discuss two important aspects of digital storytelling for feminist solidarity in academy, first the process of creating the individual digital stories in a collaborative environment and second, sharing of these digital stories in a face-to-face environment with an audience in order to raise further discussion, inviting

others into the dialogue and also circulating the discussions from these sessions by including them in this paper for the readers to find their part in the discussions. Then I conclude by asking the reader to provide comments and hopefully become engaged with digital storytelling for feminist solidarity.

Feminist Interventions in Higher Education

The discussions about neoliberal discourses and their reflections and implications in higher education have been at the core of critical studies for the past few decades[3]. Due to the limitations of this paper, I refer to a few key articles that raise issues in relation to neoliberalism in higher education with a feminist perspective. These issues are briefly, surveillance, personalization of higher education, agency for change and discrimination.

When discussing the academy in the 21st century, Drakich, Grant and Stewart (2002) argue that hiring freezes and budget cuts characterize the last thirty years in universities. Webber (2008) states and she continues with outlining the mechanisms of *new managerialism* which is one of the most important threats to feminist pedagogy and feminist scholarship.

New managerialism has seeped into the academy over the last two decades and has been instrumental in some of the changes we see in universities. Where we once spoke of 'communities of scholars', we now speak of 'workplaces' (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007: 2). New managerialism is a wide ideological movement "that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any modern political economy" (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007: 6). Alongside this ideology comes an associated set of practices concerned with performance measures, accountability, economy, efficiency and enterprise in contemporary universities (Deem, 2001; Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007; Furedi, 2002; Saunderson, 2002). Regimes of performance measurement are now firmly entrenched in universities "with the aim of realizing the benefits of customer-driven competition between service providers" (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007:11, cited in Webber, 2008: 46)

In such a setting, the universities are turned into companies where the students are defined as customers seeking better employment options after the higher education they receive. "Education is understood as a consumable good in the marketplace. Students (and their parents are seen as consumer/clients seeking skills that will lead to a job versus students seeking an education (Fox, 2002; Smith, 2004; Tudiver, 1999)" (Webber, 2008:47). In this system, Webber, states that, new managerialism is a "new form of organizational masculinity for feminist educators to negotiate" (Morley, 2002: 95) "[…] Poststructuralists argue that mechanisms such as student evaluations, as a performance indicator, are disciplinary technologies which aim to create docile workers in the academy" (Blackmore 2002; Luke, 1997; Morley, 2002) (Webber, 2008: 47).

In these universities, student evolutions are not likely to be seen as a reflection of the students but rather are understood as consumer voices, which puts the feminist scholar at risk with the conservative students. Here it would be very meaningful to refer to an important contribution to the higher education and neoliberal discourse discussions from Turkey by Coşar and Ergül (2015). In their article titled 'Free Marketization of Academia through Authoritarianism: The Bologna Process in Turkey', the focus is on the implementation of the Bologna process in Turkey giving voice to the academics. They not only aim to enrich their "analysis with emic perspective regarding the meaning the academics make of their own experiences related to the BP [Bologna Process], but also to give them voice as they have been systematically excluded from policy making processes during the last three decades" (Coşar & Ergül, 2015: 103). Coşar and Ergül's overview about the structure and transformation of higher education in Turkey, get to be easily connected to the highlights of the discussions that I referred to earlier in this article. Çoşar and Ergül argue that "the BP represents the fine-tuning between neoliberal educational policies and statist authoritarianism in the Turkish context as portrayed not only in institutional- legal terms, but also in the accounts of the academics themselves" (Coşar & Ergül, 2015:104). The post-coup period was a socio-political restructuring process in Turkey and the higher education system was not excluded, so the Council of Higher Education (YÖK: Yüksek Öğrenim Kurulu) was established in 1981 that was formed in order to standardize higher education to meet the need with the increasing number of students. However, the main goal was the institutionalization of a centralized university structure where university autonomy was hampered (Coşar & Ergül, 2015: 104-105). "In the larger picture, it can be argued that YÖK was designed to work in line with the coup spirit: instituting the structural prerequisites for the smooth working of neoliberal transformation in Turkey" (Coşar & Ergül, 2015:106). On the other hand, it was after the 1982 constitution that the private universities were established in Turkey and they have been managed through a foundation system.

> [T]he foundation universities, due to their non-profit institutional status are considered as legal public entities, they have the right to fix their tuition fees on their own; they receive financial support from the state; they have the right to dispose of state- controlled lands; they enjoy the same right to tax exemption with the public universities (Soydan&Abali, 2014, 380; LHE, 1982; Vakıf Yükseköğretim Kurumları Yönetmenliği, 2005) (Coşar & Ergül, 2015: 111).

Although the structure of the private universities seem to rely on a non-profit structure, most of these universities are associated with major multi-sectorial companies and they still function in the free market principles that hits academics in many ways. In their recent book *Ne Ders Olsa Veririz: Akademisyenin Vasıfsız İşçiye Dönüşümü [We Would Teach Any Course: The Transformation of the Academics to Unskilled Workers]* (2015) Aslı Vatansever

and Meral Gezici Yalçın aim to discuss the transformation in academic life in private universities through their analysis of the interviews they have done with the academics working in private universities. Fear of losing one's job is one of the dominant themes that has been widely mentioned by the participants in addition to the personal reflections of the authors. Degrading the qualifications of an academic and high expectations both for lecturing hours and publications are among the other concerns that have been widely reflected. The emphasis on the similarities between different private universities and normalization of this similar structure can be also seen in the quotes of the participants of the research. And this brings us to the generalization of some of the characteristics and the worthlessness of the comments and ideas of the academics in such institutions marks the fact that the academics are not valued overall. Some of the participants also mention about the isolation of academics from one another and the alienation between colleagues as well (Vatansever & Gezici Yalçın, 2015: 213-259).

In such contexts, there still seems to be nods for academics to cooperate and resist the dominant structure and discourses. For feminist academics, the establishment of women's studies departments, as well as the gender research centers are some of the important achievements of second wave feminisms. However, sustainability of these departments and centers after two decades after their establishments is another question in regards to funds provided for these programs and gender oriented research by the university administrations. "Women's Studies promises the use of liberatory pedagogies in its classes" Webber states and she adds that feminist scholars "are supposed to be able to "do" things differently: research and publish from feminist perspectives, draw on feminist pedagogies in their teaching, and utilize feminist principles in their contributions to university governance" (Webber, 2008: 40). In other words, the Women's Studies provide the necessary space for enacting feminist pedagogies in the (ibid).

On the other hand, the Women's Studies departments are not the only structures that, houses the feminist scholars. In the other departments of Social Sciences as well as the other faculties, there are feminist scholars, who leak feminist agendas to their disciplines. The other important structure for feminist women in academia is coming together in university-based activist initiatives in which students and scholars take part for collective action against discrimination. Jeni Hart, in her research with two feminist faculty groups of grassroots networks aims to find out the different strategies that emerge to help women mobilize and address issues of discrimination (Hart, 2008: 184). She seeks "to understand the relationships and activism of faculty women in order to shed light on how activist academic women define women's issues and what strategies they pursue in promoting change" (Hart, 2008: 184)[4]. Hart mentions that although the power within academia may be patriarchal, it can be transformed and the change agents for this change are the faculty members. "Because their lives are shaped not only by feminism and activism but also by the work that they do" (Hart, 2008:185) That's why

Hart states that the women's studies programs and departments are "central to the changing nature of academic feminism" (Hart, 2008:185). On the other hand, these departments face the challenge of "thinking (i.e., knowledge production) doing (i.e., activism) dichotomy" (Hart, 2008:187). She also points to the fact that "[C]ompetition, rather than collaboration or expansion of a theoretical paradigm, has become a part of Women's Studies, just as it is a part of the academic culture as a whole" (Hart, 2008:187). Besides, these sorts of "market-like behaviors" can put extra pressure on the activist, community-based and non-empirical work that was supposed to be at the core of these departments.

Conferences addressing women studies and gender are the other important sites as feminist scholars build up new networks and connect to other networks. Gender paths in the social sciences conferences also help this connection building process in academia, providing occasions for exchange of ideas, not only for scholars but also for the audience, depending on the tone of the discussions. The participants of the conferences of women's studies are not necessarily the scholars from the field but also the activists on the ground. The dialogue between different feminisms is important for collective political action. Non-academic journals/periodicals and alternative medi[5] have become places for collaboration where experiences are shared and theory meets praxis. For example, Amargi Dergi[6] in Turkey has been one of these meeting points where various feminisms co-exist with their discussion.

Digital Storytelling for Feminist Agendas

Digital storytelling has been a grass-roots movement that grew out of a community art festival in the US in 1990s with Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley's work and spread around the world[7], to Britain through its use in broadcasting to circulate the stories of ordinary people during the time of transformation of the BBC[8], led by Daniel Meadows, bringing the tools of documentary in, but still keeping the amateur spirit. It was in Australia that it got connected to academia, particular at the Queensland University of Technology and has been used as a component in research projects, such as oral history, development studies and new media technologies. My engagement with digital storytelling started at QUT while I was a visiting researcher. That was the time Hartley and McWilliam's edited book (2009), *Story Circle: Digital Storytelling Around the World* was launched and with my background in Women's Studies, there was great excitement for me to think about the possibility of using the workshop for women's participation in Turkey, particularly with a feminist organization. From my early days onwards, digital storytelling has become a way of engagement with various feminist organizations and the Amargi Women's Academy was such an organization where theory and praxis would go hand in hand. In my PhD dissertation, I suggested the use of digital storytelling workshops both for providing the ground for women to share their concerns and reflect these in their digital stories. In addition, some of the participants

in those workshops, defined an additional function of the digital stories that were created in these workshops. One of the participants, told how tricky it was to open ground for dialogue during their visits to women living in the mountain villages, but she thought that showing these villager women her digital story and asking them to tell her what they think about her story would melt the ice. I think this was what I had in mind all the way through.

The other concern, when I was structuring my PhD research on digital storytelling and the feminist theory, was that feminist pedagogy has a promise for the digital storytelling movement. The process helped me to regain my voice in academia, positioning myself at the center of the narrative of my dissertation. This was a transformative process all brought by the digital storytelling workshop practice and the dynamics it operates with.

The establishment of the digital storytelling workshop unit at Hacettepe University was also closely linked with feminist agendas. The members of the team, in addition to their own academic interests, have been connected to women's studies and feminist activism in their own way. After the workshops in cooperation with the Amargi Women's Academy, this stream of facilitating workshops in relation to our everyday life as feminists has become the core aspect of our unit. *I am a feminist*[9] digital storytelling workshop was a result of a seeking how other women define their way of being feminists. My intention was that sometimes we do not fix into pre-set categories such as feminist and redefine these definitions in order to change some aspects of it. Out of such concerns came a set of digital storytelling workshops[10], *When I was on the field*[11], *I have food on the stove*[12] and *24 Hour Details*[13] , all made a call to women in academia to join us to reflect our experiences in everyday life with various aspects, like use of time, fear of failing and the hardship of doing fieldwork in social sciences.

Since the early days of the facilitator team, the central principle in the workshops we facilitate with the team members in our Digital Storytelling Workshop team, we have tried our best not to force our participants to edit their stories according to the co-facilitators' comments, but rather co-participants' feedback. This also has provided us with the opportunity to enhance collaboration among participants at an early stage of the workshop. Collaboration among participants and with facilitators creates an environment for solidarity in the digital storytelling workshops where the flow of the six phases of a digital storytelling workshop[14] can be stressful as the average workshop takes 3-5 days or less than 3 days in the case of snap-shot workshops.

Lambert states that "[t]he storytelling process is a journey" (Lambert, 2013:69) and he mentions that in the workshops that are run by Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS), they approach this journey as a facilitated group process. This is how most of the digital storytelling facilitation teams that are involved in community-based networks think and feel. We believe that the connections made between people in the story circle help to focus and inspire each individual throughout the process. For many of the storytellers we help,

the digital story they create in our workshops may be the only digital story they ever make, in part because overcoming the challenge of finding and clarifying the insights and emotions in their story is not easily done alone. Therefore, we recommend that digital storytellers connect with others to share ideas and work through these steps together (Lambert, 2013:69).

How Dare We Not Work: Creating Circles of Sharing and Collaboration

Digital storytelling with gender agendas was introduced first to Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi- Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) [15] in Famagusta, Gazi Magusa in Northern Cyprus with my participation in the 4th International Conference on Women's Studies with a paper titled 'May Your Turn Come Next: Beyond Words Voice's Quest for Equality' (Şimşek, 2013) on digital storytelling and its significance for LGBTI activism. Then in 2013, followed a screening event that we put together for March 8th in the campus of EMU, that was a revisit to the *Digital Stories from the Amargi Women's Academy* followed by a discussion session. Then it was in the fifth of these conference series that we decided to run a pre-conference DST workshop integrating it into the program of the conference in a special session where the screening of the digital stories would be followed by a discussion section. Seven women participated in the workshop that was held as a pre-conference workshop. The time limitation was challenging as some of the participants were lecturing on the workshop day. So they had to leave right after the story circle for a few hours or arrive late to the story circle. Due to the time limitations because of the courses and the preparation for the conference ahead, we designed the workshop as a-single-day-DST-workshop and that put extra pressure on the participants. However, most reflected that this being in between things was a common feeling, rushing from one spot to the other on the campus for various responsibilities.

In this section of the paper, I first highlight the neoliberal burdens that the participants expressed in their digital stories. I enclose two images that I choose from each digital story and also provide the transcription of the digital stories in the footnotes in addition to the links where each story can be accessed.

Creating the Digital Stories

Collaboration is the most significant defining aspect in digital storytelling workshops due to the limitation of resources available, such as time, space and equipment as well as the number of facilitators to help the process. The participants while telling their own stories get connected to the stories of the others, first through the dialogic flow of the story circle, then along the other phases through helping each other to take photos and give ideas about what would suit better. Collaboration was at play during the finding of a name for the workshop. Referring back to an old children's song that says *Trik trak trik*

trak olur mu hiç çalışmamak, the participants decided that this phrase defines them the best.

Time and Measures

In her story, Criterion[16], one of the participants tells about the order in the academia where rather than the quality of the academic work being assessed, the completion of minimum criteria in the possible minimum time, brings promotion. The rest of the six women in addition to we, the facilitators, have mentioned this concern that is central to this participant. In the reflection of this concern about the criterion, an important aspect about the burden became more visible in the narratives of the participants in the story circle: The distinction between a state university and a private university. Most of the participants were the employees of a private university, but used to be graduate students in a public university where the public service mentality has been dominant.

Figure 1. Images from the Digital Story; Criterion

Being in Between: Who You Are and Who You Are Meant to Be as a Scholar

Another participant, in her digital story, In the middle of the rain[17], tells us about the isolation of reality and the real world problems, public issues dominating the academic life. She criticizes the positioning in academy that puts personal success before the engagement with the issues of the community. She reflects her own experience of struggle for being who she is with her own understanding of a university. However, she is also aware of the fact that the rules of competition are harsh and to be able to transform things from inside, she has to be in and that means she has to fulfill some of the criterion in addition to being a good lecturer, which is the thing she enjoys the most. Still she needs an umbrella to protect herself.

Figure 2. Images from the Digital Story; In the Middle of the Rain

Being trapped between what one thinks should be done and what is expected is a common theme expressed by most of the participants. It's a double bind and brings one to face the feeling of being trapped or being locked up [or in]. In her story, Who locked?[18], one of the participants shares her concerns about the rules and regulations and draws our attention to the margin where one feels she has actualized her dreams of contributing to the knowledge production with her feminist perspective or of being wasted by the pressures

from co-workers competing for promotion, while sacrificing the ideal of maintaining the university as the hub for thinking and criticism.

Figure 3. Images from the Digital Story; Who Locked?

Some aspects of everyday life are always expected to be excluded from the lives of women in academia. While telling her story called Dream[19], another participant mentions the excepted aspects of academic life: Fulfilling duties regarding the contribution to scholarship and the development of students. Her story reminds us about the isolation we have to face while doing our individual work. Not completing the daily tasks of answering the emails, reading and grading the papers while thinking about one's own research agendas is not an easy trap to get over. In addition, the mobile work station, the laptop, while creating a sense of freedom widens the burden as work can easily dominate your supposedly free time. This is where the promise of neoliberal discourse about flexible work hours comes into play. Fear of losing a laptop with all the record of work inside is one of the biggest fears of an academic for sure. I can still remember carrying my laptop with me everywhere during the time I was writing my dissertation. The device had became a part of my body. In her story, Dream, our participant knows how disturbing losing one's computer could be as in addition to the academic work inside, we keep some personal notes in our computers and the idea that another person can assess this intimate part is disturbing.
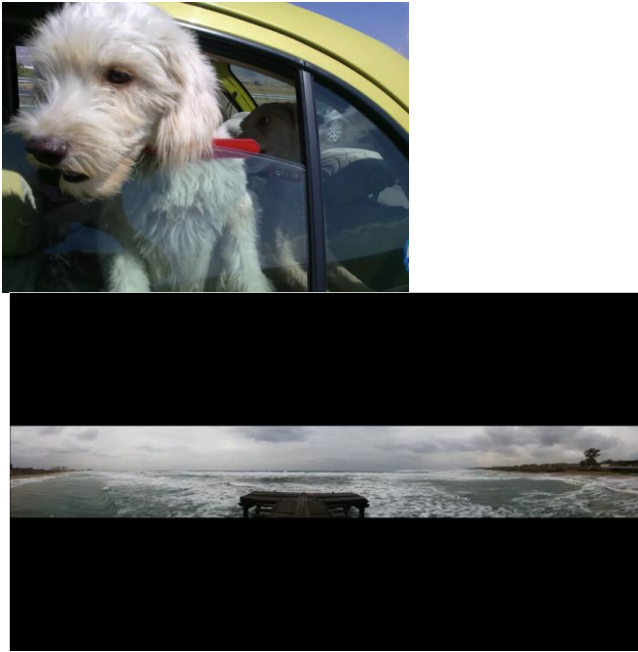
Figure 4. Images from the Digital Story; Dream

Multiple Responsibilities

In addition to the duties at work, women in academia are trapped with the responsibilities they have at home if they have families. In her story Tick, Tock, Tick, Tock[20], one of our participants, invites us to remember the rush in between seconds, minutes and hours in the day. Routine rush in academia and home hardly leaves personal time for women in academia. That's why she says she cannot live without her watches. Fulfilling the expectancy at home and at work is primary for her. Her one minute long story takes us to her rush in a day.

Figure 5. Images from the Digital Story; Tick, Tock, Tick, Tock

İnce in her discussion about digital storytelling and its use as a tactic in academia by women refers to Poyraz's research on women in academia. Poyraz makes a comparison between men and women in academia in regards to their everyday life responsibilities and academic duties. She points to the fact that when the life-work balance, the national and international mobility and the publications are taken into consideration, women are in disadvantaged positions. "In her conclusion, Poyraz states that for most academic women, the dissertation writing process, that is mentioned as the hardest phase of the PhD studies, usually intersects with getting married and having their kids and due to the temporary working conditions during the PhD studies, dependency on family weighs heavier and as a result academic life becomes secondary in the list of women" (2013: 15, 16, cited in İnce, 2015: forthcoming). What about the single women in academy? Are they free of responsibilities? With her digital story, Flat shoes or books?[21], another participant makes us ask these questions. Whether to fit an extra book into her bag instead of flat shoes is pretty symbolic for making a choice about life decisions to be single or building up a family. She reminds us that a single woman has duties to carry her own life, the bills should be paid, the car should be taken to the mechanic's and shopping for the week still has to be done.

Figure 6. Images from the Digital Story; Flat shoes or Books?

The life in academy needs colors most of the time. In her story You are like in a socks ad[22], while depicting an incidence about a student's reaction to her colorful socks, another participant reflects her concerns about being positioned as the Other. The senior feminist lecturers mostly create the secure areas for the younger ones who usually confront assaults about their critical thinking.

Figure 7. Images from the Digital Story; You are Like in a Socks Ad

All of the concerns that our participants reflect in their digital stories connects us to the discussions about emotions. Kabakcı (2012) in her paper Eğitimli Kadınların Gündelik Hayatını Kuşatan Korkular [Fear Surrounding Everyday Life Of Educated Women], through her analysis of the in-depth interviews she conducted with seven women continuing their graduate studies, finds out that the young women in academia develop social fears such as being unsuccessful, insufficient, unemployed, etc. rather than specific fears such as fearing a dog. Kabakcı, relying on her arguments on Sara Ahmed's dealing with fear, points out that emotions have a role in the construction of the social (cited in Kabakcı 2012:50-51). Kabakcı concludes that although most of the fears seem to be personal, they are common and the reason for this can be best explained through the understanding about emotions, not merely as psychological, but social and cultural as well. She points to the neoliberal capitalist order as the determinant of these fears, with the aspects that gray the inside and outside; flexible time; flexible skills; unsecured employment and temporality (2012:72).

Widening the Circles: Engaging More Voices

The public screening of this workshop took place on the first day of the conference, following the keynote speech of Nancy Lindisfarne. So I started the introduction of the session, referring to the highlights of Lindisfarne's speech that marked the importance of developing an understanding about various feminisms. After a brief introduction about ourselves, with the co-facilitator of the workshop Gökçe Zeybek Kabakcı, I talked for a few minutes about my agendas with digital storytelling and women's studies and the self-reflective aspect of these in my life, whereas Gökçe Zeybek Kabakcı, focused on her work about fear and how educated women define fear in their everyday life, linking her previous work to the workshop we co-facilitated the previous day. Then we left the ground to the digital stories.

After the screening, we told the audience that the ground was open for discussion and invited the participants of this workshop to share their ideas about their participation in this digital storytelling workshop about neoliberal discourses in academia. One of our participants said: This workshop at least gave us a break. This didn't need to be perfect. I am not a director. But I have a story. Among the audience were two of the participants of a former workshop, *While I was in the fieldwork*. One of them stated that:

> While watching these digital stories I remembered my workshop experience. In that workshop, we had realised that fear was our common theme. I think this is all about the tags that are stuck to us. [...] By then, I had the question in mind whether the digital storytelling workshop is a practice that would be only for middle class. But now I think it is not. Another thing is... I sometimes watch my story again. And the others from that workshop. And each time I learn something more about myself. This is not a short term empowering in that sense. It is a long term and permanent sort of empowerment.

Once we asked, what sort of a group they would like to carry this practice of storytelling to, to collect narratives. The same participant said that she would be curious what it would be like to have a workshop with the group she worked with for her dissertation that lives in a very poor neighborhood in Ankara. She stated that "it would be great to see the existance of various states of womanhood co-existing and still grasping the common themes through digital storytelling with such a disadvantaged group would be more convenient".

One of the women in the audience stated that coming to this session and watching these digital stories gave her the impression she is not alone with the way she feels about the burdens she faces in academia. However, it was not only the life in academia that was discussed. One of the audience took her turn to talk and she said that "Being a woman is hard. Cook your meal, sit and do your knitting and don't ask for more". That brought the discussion into the mechanisms of resistance for women as the next theme for another digital storytelling workshop as expressed by another woman in the audience. She

mentioned about the power of the tone of the digital story Criterion. She stated that although the story is about burden, the way it is told in a sarcastic way helps us to feel that we are not alone and we can be in solidarity.

Final remarks of this section should be through a self-reflective account. At the end of the session, as a facilitator, I was empowered. The digital storytelling workshops, especially the single day ones, demand lot of energy and engagement from the facilitators. Defining myself as a feminist, I once more has been convinced that providing the ground for bridging feminist scholarship with the practice of digital storytelling to hear voices and to create the ground voices to be circulated, helps me to give voice to my concerns about gender inequalities. In addition, through digital storytelling, it is likely to widen the network of resistance and solidarity.

Conclusion

In an environment where it is getting harder to keep one's position as a feminist, Webber states that "the key force of Women's Studies is the explicit political commitment to the importance and utilization of alternative pedagogies. Here we have feminist "knowledge workers" who are throwing away their pedagogy because they are constantly working on the margins of academia. (Webber, 2008: 42). Working in the margins of society could be both a threat and a deep breath as the digital story In the middle of the rain reminds us. But we need umbrellas to protect ourselves and each other in the harsh environment of academia, driven by neoliberal discourses that are internalized by most of the colleagues in faculties.

The digital storytelling workshops that we run are inspired by our own experiences as facilitators, can engage more women and help us develop new understandings about various feminisms. As the workshop processes encourage the participants to collaborate to complete their individual digital story, enjoying the process and finding amateur but creative solutions can help feminists to transfer these practices to other areas in their struggles in academia. In other words, the workshops and the screenings provide the environment for listening to each other and expressing ourselves.

Discovering the diversity in the experiences of women, and feminists in particular can provide us new ways of resistance. "A common female voice or female language may both become the strength or the restriction, as Baxter states" (Şimsek, 2012a: 74) Litosseliti (2006) suggests that: "to theorise the female voice in public contexts, we need to focus on discourses in different localized settings and communities of practice; we also need to consider the interactional goals of participants in public arguments, and the interpersonal and power relationships between them; and we need not lose sight of the subtle and complex links between discourses and women's and men's social positions (Litosseliti, 2006, 56)" (Şimsek, 2012a: 91)

"Just as feminism is complex, the activism that emerged from feminist faculty organizations is complex" (Hart, 2008:189). When this complexity

meets the changing market-driven neoliberal discourses that dominate the academia, feminist scholars have to find various ways of resistance. Giving voice to concerns about criterion, time limitations and multiple responsibilities matters more in this sense. Because, it not only the feminist scholars in the theshold, but also the feminist outside academia that is hit by the overall neoliberal discourses that narrow down the everyday life for women in neoconservative tendencies that target women directly. In such a context, the women's studies departments should keep their position of potential to remain "a location of possibility" (hooks, as cited by Rinehart, 2002:177)" (Webber, 2008:51). This also brought us to the questions of the distance between academic feminisms and the activist feminisms. I suggest that the digital storytelling workshops provide the grounds to share and listen to experiences as equals in a circle. In addition running digital storytelling workshops in feminist organizations such as the Amargi Women's Academy, the workshop practice can provide an occasion for women to form new activist networks. In the neoliberal university context, the individual digital stories could have the potential to attract attention to the concerns of academics challenging and even impacting the decisions of university managements. The aim of the digital storytelling workshop that I talked about in the details above was not only facilitating the creation of digital stories that are told by feminist academics but also carrying these digital stories into the program of a women's conference in a special session that hosted both the screening of these digital stories and an open discussion ground about our neoliberal concerns in academia and everyday life.

Acknowledgement

Notes

[1] This workshop was co-facilitated with Gökçe Zeybek Kabakcı from Digital Storytelling Unit at Hacettepe University.

[2] Conference web page: http://cws.emu.edu.tr/ndge2015/conference-program.

[3] I follow the works of David Harvey and Henry Giroux (2009) for the foundations of this paper. In addition, the special volume (Vol. 26, 2015) of *Alternate Routes:* Neoliberalism and Degradation of Education, could provide further discussions on neoliberalism and education.

[4] Hart defines the "activist strategies as the purposeful methods in which members of an organization engage in order to raise consciousness and foster change about issues central to women in the academy" (Hart, 2008:188).

[5] Eser Köker's article about feminist alternative media provides a record in Turkey (1996).

[6] Amargi Dergi web adress: http://www.amargidergi.com/yeni.

[7] Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS): http://storycenter.org.

[8] Capture Wales Project : http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalst orytelling.shtml.

[9] http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/Feministim.

[10] The collection of digital stories told in relation to gender issues are available on http://www.di gital storyhub.org/filter/gender

[11] http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/Ben-Alandayken

[12] http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/Ocakta-Yemegim-Var

[13] http://www.digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/24-Saat-Detay-kadin-akademisyenlerin-zaman-kulla nimi

[14] Story circle, story to notes, voice over recording, image preparation, assembling digital story and in-group screening are the stages of a conventional digital storytelling workshop. For detail description can be found in Şimşek, 2012a:61-65

[15] Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) was found in 1979 as a technology institute and in 1984 with the agreement between Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the Republic of Turkey, the institute was transformed into a private university that would be managed by the regulations of the Council for Higher Education in Turkey.

[16] Criterion, criterion, criterion... Criteria for being accepted, criteria for being successful, criteria for promotion...The time given for fulfilling the criterion, two years, four years, five years, seven years... In minimum time frame, fulfilling the minimum criterion is the favorite. Don't you dare to widen the research with scientific concerns and spend time. Don't think about social or personal responsibilities. Use the time only for your academic promotion. Don't forget, only the ones who complete the minimum criteria in minimum time will be rewarded. The one who exceeds the time limit, although she tries to reach her best, will be short of criteria. And the ones who exceed the time are punished, punished, punished and will be punished. The reign /rule of the ones who comply with the criteria are forever. https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/video/123836740.

[17] We were to change life and the world. What has changed? Have I? Or the idea of university? University used to be the place for thinking? And, of course criticism. When has it become the place for the average non-critics and non-thinkers? It all happened in front of our eyes. While we were in it. Now I am in the middle. There is no turning back. Keep on. All right I keep on, but while keeping on in this free market, that is non-thinking, short of feelings and heaven of the civil servant sort of mentality, from the middle of this I have run to the margins to breathe. For touching reality, there was working with the migrant kids and migrant women in these margins. There was struggling together with the ones fighting to transform the world from the bottom up. Or there was writing for the journals or books that are not coin of the realm. Rarely were there times I negotiated with the center. There were times I said, "All right, understood!". But there was no running away from the margins. I could not run and I didn't want to run away, I think. Now I am in the middle of thinking. How was the song of Mazhar Fuat Özkan? "I am in the middle of the rain". It is obvious that I will get wet. I think if I can open my umbrella when necessary, that is the only thing I would like to learn. If I can open the umbrella when the rain turns to hail that can crack my head and if I can think of doing that, the event hat will be enough. Still rest can be in the margins. I love the rain. https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/video/123836742

[18] There are rules for using the toilet. The door should be locked. The toilet paper will be checked. OK I am secure. The door can't be opened. Who locked the door? I locked it. Then why do I forget to open it? Who brought the rule for locking the doors? When did I internalize this rule? Internalizing, accepting, rejecting, being afraid... Remembering the rule...Transforming one's self... Making peace with the thing one is transformed into... Being divided into two... Acting like the one that one is transformed into... Acting like one's self... https://vimeo.com/album/33300 93/video/123836743.

[19]Again it is evening. Unreturned emails, papers brought but haven't been read, books that are taken from home if needed for a reference... I collect them back again and I go to my car. I put the laptop bag next to the tire. After all it is the most important piece. Among the food for dogs and cats- by the way they are the burdens of my heart I never talk about in academia, I open the trunk and put in all the other bags. I go home. The laptop is missing. I remember at once. It was there next to the tire. I go back. The parking area is empty. I ask the pizza delivery boy, "There was a laptop bag lying in this huge parking area? Have you seen it?" "No!" he says. What more could he say? A horrible night waits for me. The last saved documents, the unfinished articles, the final version of that report, everything is there. My emails and my dreams. And what not... All my academic load flies away with the computer they're symbolically loaded in. Next day, I receive a call. "I found your computer last night, but I didn't call last night as I didn't want to disturb you" says a woman's voice. Disturb? https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/video/123837 004

[20] Is it possible to stop time? I could stop time if I could have a magic pen. Then I could fit in many things into that time. Hours are divided into minutes. Minutes to seconds... Then you realize that days, months, even years have passed and yet you are trying to boogie down to somewhere. The essentials of my life are my watches. I am trying to fit my responsibilities of home and career into the minutes. On the one hand, a hard-working academic who is keen on thinking, developing new ideas and writing, on the other hand, at home, a good partner and a good mother who takes care of bringing up her children. My world is between this dilemma, fixing these into divided hours, minutes and seconds. Everything should be done as it was decided on earlier. It is eight o'clock, time to go to my desk and turn on the computer, being scientific and productive. It is 16:00, time to go home. Hop up, turn off the computer until tomorrow, it stays on sleep. Then starts the home time. The warm dishes are put on the table, the washing is done, kids' homework are done, and at the end the kids are prepared for bed and it is 9:30, the lights are turned off. https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/video/123836744.

[21]I start the rush of the day with a huge bag that I try to fit time in. When leaving home, I try to fit in everything I would need during that day into my bag. Loads of books, my phone charger, my laptop... I try to fit them all in. On my way to the office from home and back, I try to feed the street cats in a hurry. In the office, under my desk there are always a pair of thongs and a pair of flat shoes. As I will be leaving the office late at night, I am well prepared. Everything is in my bag. At twelve at night, with the same rush, I get ready to leave the office this time. The books in the plastic bag that is torn apart due to the heavy load, is in one hand, my bag is full to top and my eye catches the book left on the desk. A silly midnight question is replied to immediately. Instead of the flat shoes, I can fit in another book. I am very tired. I know that I will fall asleep as soon as I get home. But I won't be at peace if I don't get that. At midnight while the washing is being done, I get back to the desk at home. Next day, I pay the bills, the queue in the bank, quick shopping for the meal and in between I deal with issues about my car. The week passes like this. While I am thinking about not being able to catch-up on time, they are talking about how lucky I am. What sort of responsibilities can a single woman have? https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/vide o/123837006.

[22] It was three years ago. We were doing a workshop about sexual assault and sexual harassment. The workshop was with a group of students from year three of the Faculty of Law who were interested in women's rights. The students in this group had earlier taken a course called, "Women in Law" so the students in this group had knowledge of gender. In the workshop there was a warm atmosphere. One of the woman students saw my maroon socks and she said, " Ms. You are just like in a socks ad". She shuddered. "I am sorry Ms., I was taken unawares". I realized that. It was pretty obvious from her body language that she was sorry. While thinking about that, I thought, "OK this student thinks that way, but what about the rest?" What could be said to the ones who intentionally dropped hints about my clothes? What about the ones who needled me about the way I dress up, that don't necessary comply with their styles? As they are senior lecturers, they feel they have the right to needle me. Not being able to openly state that they don't want me to dress like this is not the reason they keep clear of me. They are afraid of my professor. In other words, minding another chair's assistant is understood as minding the professor of that chair. https://vimeo.com/album/3330093/video/123837005

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