

Affective Digital Media of New Migration From Turkey: Feelings, Affinities, and Politics

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This article explores how affective digital media spaces and practices can create affinities, give rise to collectivities, and facilitate possibilities of hope in difficult times. It addresses new migration from Turkey that has been prompted by the escalating political oppression, through its collective, public, and political feelings that are communicated, circulated, and archived on digital media. Underpinned by broader ongoing ethnographic research on affective spaces and collectivities emerging in the context of new migration from Turkey, this article focuses on a particular digital media space and collective, *Kopuntu* (Diaspora), which addresses affective experiences, including “negative” feelings, as sources for collective imaginations, actions, and hope. Invested with feelings that emerge from the entangled experiences of political oppression and migration, *Kopuntu*’s digital space is shaped and experienced as an affective place and archive; it opens a doorway to intimacies and affinities both within and beyond the context of new migration from Turkey and facilitates alternative formulations of diasporicity and collectivity, along with possibilities of hope, on the basis of common feelings rather than particular identities and places.

Keywords: digital media, public feeling, political feeling, affect, affinity, collectivity, intimacy, hope, migration, diaspora, Turkey

We are people who were forced or chose to leave the land we were born in, since our wish to live together is no longer tolerated and is psychologically or physically oppressed. Perhaps, we are people who did not or could not leave when given a chance. Or, we are people who wake up to each new day with the thought of leaving. (*Kopuntu.org*, para. 3; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

This is a statement from the manifesto of *Kopuntu* (Diaspora), one of the digital media spaces and collectives founded by people who have recently left Turkey. Because of escalating political oppression and turmoil in Turkey, a growing number of people who are concerned about direct threats to or conflicts in their lives and careers—mostly academics,¹ artists, journalists, and students—are leaving the country and settling

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¹ A particular case is that of the flight of academics who are signatories to the 11 January 2016 petition, “We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime!,” publicly known as the Academics for Peace Petition. Signatory academics

around the globe.² Proliferating media narratives of new migration from Turkey, especially to Germany, coin specific terms to describe the emerging group, such as “new generation diaspora,” “Gezi diaspora,”³ and “new wave Berliners.”⁴

Having recently migrated from Turkey myself, I characterize our migration experience as a profoundly affective one, shaped by mostly “negative” feelings that flow from the lived experiences of political oppression, violence, and trauma and fuel the desire, need, or impulse to leave the country—loss, hopelessness, anger, disappointment, fear, anxiety, grief, depression, suffocation, stuck-ness, and overwhelmedness; these feelings take on collective, public, and political characters. Feelings of new migration from Turkey “reverberate in and out of cyberspace” (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 1, emphasis in original) as they move through various websites, blogs, online journalism sites, Facebook groups, and Twitter hashtags.⁵ Loss and survival, inertia and excitement, fear and solidarity, hopelessness and hope attach to and move along with stories, testimonies, memories, news, and information, exchanged on digital media spaces that accompany recent migration from Turkey.

This article focuses on a particular digital media space and collective founded by new migrants from Turkey, *Kopuntu* (Diaspora), which addresses affective experiences, including “negative” feelings, as sources for collective imaginations, action, and hope. Launched with the online publication of an emotionally and politically powerful manifesto (<https://kopuntu.org/2017/05/31/kopuntu-manifesto-english/>) on May 31, 2017, *Kopuntu* has published articles, essays, journalistic pieces, interviews, and multimedia works on its online

have been facing dismissal from their university posts, as well as trials, detention, and imprisonment. For further information and opportunities for solidarity, see barisicinakademisyenler.net.

² The Turkish Statistical Institute reports that the number of emigrants with Turkish citizenship was 69,326 in 2016, 113,326 in 2017, and 136,746 in 2018. According to migration reports by Germany’s Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the number of immigrants from Turkey to Germany was 27,805 in 2014 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2016); 32,684 in 2015 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016); 41,296 in 2016 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2019); and 47,750 in 2017 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2019). The 2015 report states that “with regards to Turkey a migration surplus of 2,100 persons (2014: -4,100) was recorded for the first time since 2006” (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016, p. 3).

³ This term refers to the 2013 Gezi movement in Turkey, which started in Gezi Park, Istanbul, and spread countrywide.

⁴ Ağır and Karıcı (2017b), “Germany: New Generation Diaspora”; Zambrana (2016), “The Gezi Diaspora”; Çay (2017) “New Wave Berlin.”

⁵ New migrants from Turkey established a range of digital media platforms that include *Kopuntu* (Diaspora; <https://kopuntu.org/>), a website and collective; New Wave in Berlin (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/newwaveinberlin/>), Ötekilerin Berlin Dalgası (Others’ Berlin Wave; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/235696503857616/>), and New Wave in Germany (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/newwaveingermany/>), Facebook groups for mutual support; Off-university (<https://off-university.com/>), an online teaching and research site; GAK—Gurbetteki Akademisyenler (Academics Out of the Country; <https://gak3harfililer.wordpress.com/>), a collaborative blog by fleeing academics; Özgürüz (We Are Free; <https://ozguruz.de/>), a journalism site; and Taz.gazete (<https://gazete.taz.de/>), a bilingual Web portal.

platform in five languages—mainly Turkish, but also in English, German, Italian, and Spanish⁶—and organized public events, including talks, screenings, performances, concerts, and exhibitions.⁷ *Kopuntu* defines itself as “interdisciplinary multi-lingual multi-media” and “new generation diaspora.” In its longer definition, *Kopuntu* is:

An interdisciplinary solidarity network founded to provide a physical and digital production space, together with wider networking opportunities based upon mobilization, to support and enable collaboration and cooperation between journalists, academics, writers, artists, students and anyone who has been oppressed, silenced or precluded due to the politics which has narrowed production and living space in Turkey. (Kopuntu.org, para. 1; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

Kopuntu's digital space is shaped and experienced as a distinctively affective place and archive that communicates the collective, public, and political feelings of new migration from Turkey. In addition to the manifesto, the texts published by *Kopuntu* span a wide range of topics, including stories of new migrants, historical and political analyses on Turkey, and reflections on the Gezi movement, feminist and queer critiques, art, music, literature, and urban spaces, all of which are imbued with the lived and felt experiences of the political. While the personal and emotional narratives of those who have recently left Turkey revolve around political events, reflections on the public and political spheres attend strikingly to affects, feelings, and emotions. Invested with the feelings that flow from entangled experiences of political oppression and migration, *Kopuntu's* digital space evidences how the private and the public, and the emotional and the political entwine and shape one another.

The growing scholarship on affect, emotion, and feeling—described as the “affective turn” (Clough & Halley, 2007)—challenges the confinement of affective and emotional experiences to the private and personal realms, as well as the private–public distinction itself.⁸ A series of terms and concepts, such as the “cultural

⁶ As of September 2019, kopuntu.org had published 142 posts. It had 122,153 views and 84,510 visitors from 131 countries. The highest numbers of visitors were from Turkey, Germany, Greece, the United States, and Italy. As of September 18, 2019, Kopuntu's Facebook page had 2,082 followers, and its Twitter account had 183 followers.

⁷ To date, Kopuntu has organized or participated in the following public events: “KOPUNTU Collective” Borgofuturo Festival, Italy, July 8–9, 2017 (Kopuntunetwork, 2017); “New Generation Diaspora,” Kultivera, Sweden, September 29, 2017 (Kultivera Tranås, 2017); “Confusion,” Macao Milano, Italy, December 2–5, 2017 (Tele Rivadolceriva, 2017); Brechtfestival 2018, Germany, March 3, 2018 (Kopuntu, 2018); Kopuntu Blossoming in Beirut, Lebanon, May 2–5, 2018 (Kopuntu, n.d.); Yoppeleyeppe#3-Pâtes Fraîches et Justice Climatique, Belgium, May 5, 2019; Kopuntu kick-off BLN, Berlin, May 31, 2019; Youth Workers Social Camp, Italy, July 3–9, 2019; and AUCH - Nachbar*schaft ist Kunst, Berlin, August 24, 2019–September 1, 2019.

⁸ Largely derived from the philosophical work of Massumi (2002), a distinction between *affect* and *emotion* constitutes a critical debate in this literature. In Massumi's use of the term, *affect* refers to pre-personal, nonconscious, and unstructured experiences of bodily intensities (Gould, 2009). *Emotion*, on the other hand, is the partial “conventional or coded expression” of affect in gesture and language (Massumi, 2003, p. 25). Throughout this article, I employ the term *feeling* to refer to both emotion and affect; this is following Cvetkovich's (2012) argument that the term can encompass both affect and emotion, “because it is intentionally

politics of emotion" (Ahmed, 2014), "public feelings" (Cvetkovich, 2007), "political emotions" (Staiger, Cvetkovich, & Reynolds, 2010), and the "intimate public" (Berlant, 2008), point out that affects, feelings, and emotions are collective, public, and political, not "merely" psychological, personal, and private. This critique aims not only to interweave the private and the emotional with the public and the political, but also to show the ways in which they shape one another (Ahmed, 2014). On the one hand, the affects, feelings, and emotions of ordinary life take shape and density as they move through social, public, and political worlds (Stewart, 2007). On the other, public and political spheres are not solely ideological and cognitive formations, but emerge as affective spaces of emotional investment and identification (Berlant, 2008).

By mediating feelings "as transmittable, spreadable, networked, and without self-containment" (Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013, p. 3), digital media significantly interweave the emotional with the collective, public, and political spheres. Digital media spaces, texts, and practices are affectively charged in that they shape, perform, circulate, archive, anchor, intensify, and transform feelings (Kuntsman, 2012). The affective value of digital media is manifested in online communities built around fantasy, pleasure, and desire (Ferreday, 2009), intimate experiences of love and sexuality (Fürst, 2013; Phillips & O'Riordan, 2007), and encounters with death, mourning, and grief (Lagerkvist & Andersson, 2017). Furthermore, affective digital media environments can powerfully serve the emergence of new collectivities, political subjectivities, and activist practices, as has been well illustrated in feminist and queer resistance and activism (Juhász, 2017; Raun, 2012; Rentschler, 2014) and in other social movements, political uprisings, and global politics (Karatzogianni, 2012; Papacharissi, 2015; Schuschke & Tynes, 2016). These affective modes of collectivities and activism supported by digital media reveal "the need to think about feelings, technologies, and politics *together*, through each other" (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 2, emphasis in original).

The political significance of affects, feelings, and emotions, including "negative" ones, arises through their potential to bring about new and alternative forms of publicness, collectivity, and activism (Cvetkovich, 2012; Gould, 2009). Launched at the University of Texas in 2002 to address political disappointments of intellectuals and activists in the post-9/11 United States, the collective project Public Feelings aimed to move beyond the distinction between positive and negative feelings, through "the 'depathologization' of negative feelings . . . and the resulting rethinking of categories such as utopia, hope, and happiness as entwined with and even enhanced by forms of negative feeling" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 5). For example, political depression, identified by the project as a keyword to describe and discuss capitalism, neoliberalism, and globalization, might cause withdrawal, inertia, and despair, yet "these feelings, moods, and sensibilities become sites of publicity and community formation" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 2).

With a focus on the context of new migration from Turkey, this article addresses how affective experiences of dark times can serve as sources for affinities and collectivities that might transcend locally and historically specific situations. Based on the case of *Kopuntu*, it explores how affective digital media spaces that publicly communicate, circulate, and archive feelings can show and create affinities, give rise to collectivities, and facilitate possibilities of hope. What kinds of feelings emerge from entangled experiences of political oppression and migration? How are digital media spaces shaped and experienced as affective and intimate

imprecise, retaining the ambiguity between feelings as embodied sensations and feelings as psychic or cognitive experiences" (p. 4).

places and archives? How can affective digital spaces serve for imagining and creating affinities, along with possibilities of hope? How can they support alternative imaginations and definitions of diasporicity and collectivity?

In what follows, I will first portray collective, public, and political feelings of new migration from Turkey by exemplifying them through affectively charged narratives published by *Kopuntu*. Second, I will discuss how *Kopuntu's* digital space serves as an affective place and archive, and thereby shapes and reshapes intimacies and affinities among strangers. Third, I will address *Kopuntu's* alternative definition of diasporicity (as being or feeling *kopuntu*) and discuss how it serves for imagining and creating an affective collectivity, along with possibilities of hope, based on common feelings both within and beyond the context of new migration from Turkey.

Methodology

This article is underpinned by a broader ongoing ethnography of affective spaces and collectivities, emerging in the context of new migration from Turkey, which I have been carrying out since June 2018. Having recently migrated from Turkey myself, I employ an ethnographic approach that is engaged and collaborative, developed in the recent research on transnational, global, and grassroots networks and movements. Engaged ethnography aims to produce more particular, detailed, and critical scholarly knowledge from within, as well as accessible, actionable, and transformative knowledge which will potentially contribute to the network or movement (Casas-Cortes, Osterweil, & Powell, 2013; Juris & Khasnabish, 2013; Routledge, 2013). Thus, I actively participate in the research field, seek to collaborate with the research participants who are self-reflexive knowledge producers themselves, and aim to facilitate communication among diverse forms of knowledge (Casas-Cortes et al., 2013). For example, I engage with the *Kopuntu* network as an ethnographer/member in several ways, thanks to its great openness to exchange and collaborate. I am involved in its internal e-mail group and Facebook Messenger group. With one of the initiators, I participated in the panel "Resistance in Exile: Strategies of New Diaspora and Solidarity(s) Between Germany and Turkey," organized by the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin, to discuss new migration from Turkey and reflect on the case of *Kopuntu*. We continue to exchange ideas about possible future collaborations that will potentially contribute to both the *Kopuntu* collective and my own research.

In this research, I employ a range of ethnographic techniques, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and autoethnographic practice. To date, I have conducted 42 unstructured or semistructured interviews with individuals who left Turkey after 2013, in a way that facilitated open-ended and continuing conversations.⁹ I carry out participant observation in both digital and physical spaces that are significantly relevant to the experience of new migration from Turkey. Daily, I follow websites, blogs, online journalism sites, and online groups (within WhatsApp, Facebook, and Facebook Messenger) founded by new migrants, and I participate where possible; I also follow individual social media accounts when allowed. I archive and close-read posts, comments, essays, articles, and interviews that are shared in these digital media spaces, paying attention to those that express affective experiences and/or reflect on cases of

⁹ A total of 23 face-to-face interviews in Berlin and 19 video conference interviews via Skype or Facebook Messenger.

collectivity, collaboration, solidarity, and activism. Furthermore, I participate in the public events in Berlin that are created by, and/or attract, new migrants from Turkey, including talks, panels, open discussions, exhibitions, screenings, festivals, concerts, and street protests.¹⁰ In my diaries, I record the everyday conversations I engage in, and I document my own experiences and testimony.

Backdropped by broader ethnographic research, this article is particularly derived from in-depth interviews with the initiators, authors, and members of *Kopuntu*, close reading of the texts published by *Kopuntu*, and observation of and participation in *Kopuntu*'s internal Facebook Messenger group and e-mail group, public Facebook group, and public events in Berlin. I carried out semistructured interviews with two initiators, three authors, and three members of *Kopuntu*, asking specific questions about the foundational story, aims, perceptions, and experiences of both the digital space and the collective, and facilitating open-ended conversations. Following my initial contact with *Kopuntu* via e-mail, I carried out the first interview (and the two additional follow-up interviews) with the initiator, the most active in *Kopuntu*'s activities, from the writing of its manifesto to the organization of public events. Later, I interviewed others who responded to my interview request in the internal Facebook Messenger group and the public Facebook group.¹¹ Throughout this article, I refer to those who founded *Kopuntu* and have been the most influential during the process of writing the manifesto as "initiators"; to those who published on *Kopuntu* as "authors"; and to those who follow *Kopuntu*'s website, social media accounts, and public events as "members"—although these categories certainly overlap.

Feelings of New Migration From Turkey

In 2017, I migrated from Ankara to Konstanz, a small town in Germany, as a "threatened scholar," moving to Berlin at the end of the year. I felt intense isolation and loneliness in Konstanz, because I was away from friends and intimate strangers whom I assumed were having similar experiences to mine. I missed being in our favorite bar in Ankara, where I used to hear strangers discussing, complaining about, or laughing about the recent political events that have now taken up almost every aspect of our lives. I missed feeling the air in the room, which made me realize that the anger, anxiety, disappointment, and hopelessness were not my personal, private issues, but our collective, public, and political feelings that emerged from our experiences of these dark times. It was on one of these lonely days that I discovered *Kopuntu*'s website (Figure 1) and read its emotional and political manifesto for the first time. I immediately felt that I belonged to the "we" whom the manifesto spoke to, not simply because it was written for people who have recently left Turkey, or its reference to academics, but because it reminded me of that air in the

¹⁰ To mention a few: DisPlaced-rePlaced 2, Berlin, April 11–13, 2019; Berlin Walks With İstanbul Pride March, Berlin, July 1, 2018; Die Neue Diaspora in Berlin, Berlin, May 22, 2019; KuirFest Berlin 2019, Berlin, May 23–June 7, 2019; In the Blink of A Bird, Berlin, April 27–June 2, 2019; Situational Dictionary: NOW, Berlin, June 22–July 27, 2018; Kopuntu kick-off BLN, Berlin, May 31, 2019; Gezi Festival Berlin, Berlin, June 2, 2018; Fragments of Violence–Turkey 2013–2018, Berlin, May 26, 2019.

¹¹ Of the 10 interviews with eight individuals, four were conducted face-to-face in Berlin and six by video conference on Skype. Current residences of the interviewees include Germany, Ireland, Estonia, Italy, The Netherlands, and Turkey. All interviewees have university degrees, and five have master's degrees. Their professions include journalism, multimedia production, marketing, civil society work, teaching, and engineering.

room. When I met with one of *Kopuntu's* initiators, I learned that I was not the only person who felt this way; many other people who are moved by the manifesto—or “who interiorize the manifesto,” to quote the initiator—respond emotionally to *Kopuntu* by writing e-mails which disclose their feelings.



Figure 1. A screenshot from *Kopuntu's* website.

The opening sentences of *Kopuntu's* manifesto are: “We are confused. Our minds and bodies are enthusiastic. We hold hands in time and space where the ground is slippery” (Kopuntu.org, para. 1). The most profound affective experience resulting from the escalating political oppression in Turkey has been the sense of loss caused by restrictions on and transformation of public spaces, suppression of civic engagements, political and social exclusion, distrust of institutions and people, risk or fear of imprisonment and job loss, or simply the shutting down of a place, cultural event, or website. This constant and acute political turmoil has brought about an unpredictability to life and a sense of stuck-ness, a state of waiting. In her essay, “I Am Here, Simply Standing,” published on *Kopuntu*, author Sine Ergün—who chose to stay in Turkey—powerfully conveys the recent emotional/political atmosphere there:

The year 2017. Turkey. People constantly feel the impulse to leave or the obligation to do so. We are gathered around tables, making final decisions, and then “but. . .,” “how. . .,” “let’s wait,” “what if it gets better?” I can’t remember how many times we traveled the world, sat around how many raki tables. . . . Then, I watched my beloved ones leaving or being imprisoned, one after another. We carry on an insipid life with the ones who stayed. . . . We continue, like a child whose toy has been taken by the sea knows that it will come back with the next wave. Or, we carry on doing the little things with might, like a mother standing and ironing, knowing that she cannot change such a turbulent past. (Ergün, 2017, paras., 4, 7; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

New migration from Turkey has been fueled by such feelings of loss, anxiety, fear, anger, and despair. The motives behind the desire, need, or impulse to leave the country are encapsulated in one sentence that is commonly voiced in everyday interactions in physical places and social media spaces: “This is no longer a place to live!” In their article, “Germany: Immigration of the Suffocated,” published on *Bianet* and linked by *Kopuntu*, Volkan Ağır and İbrahim Karıcı (2017) address this feeling of suffocation as the very reason to migrate. Regarding people who recently left Turkey, they write,

Common to those people . . . is the feeling of constriction in their life worlds. We can liken their psychological state to abandoning a place in very stressful moments, saying, "I feel suffocated; I am going out for fresh air." (para. 1; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

It is on these "slippery" grounds, where individual and collective worlds have been falling apart, that *Kopuntu's* manifesto calls for "holding hands." Rather than a concrete goal, the manifesto originated from exchanges of feelings and stories via Skype talks—from "online healing sessions," to quote one initiator—among eight individuals, some of whom knew others as friends or collaborators from earlier collective projects. The manifesto focuses on the questions of who we are and how we feel, speaking to the people who have recently left Turkey or who "wake up to each new day with the thought of leaving" (Kopuntu.org). It mentions diverse professional practices, socioeconomic groups, and sexual orientations, touches on the recent cases of solidarity and activism, and lists the countries where new migrants are settling. The emotionality of the manifesto intensifies as it names and performs feelings and experiences (Ahmed, 2014) that are seemingly shared by "us": confusion, enthusiasm, excitement, oppression, togetherness, solidarity, sensitivity, shock, trauma, and alienation. The manifesto closes by declaring, "We are incorrigible romantics, idealists, and dreamers" (Kopuntu.org, para. 15).

The entwinement of the political and the emotional that characterizes the manifesto is also discernible in essays, articles, interviews, and multimedia works that *Kopuntu* publishes on a wide range of topics. Affective narratives within *Kopuntu* are imbued with both the experience of migration and the experience of political oppression and conflict in Turkey, blending together and taking shape through one another. Some first-person narratives convey these feelings of loss, isolation, loneliness, nostalgia, longing, and alienation that are commonly associated with migration experiences (Svašek, 2013). For example, in his essay "The Red Scarf," Hüseyin Mete (2017) narrates one of his night-time strolls in Berlin:

A big street in a big city. Lights and colors everywhere. . . . But everywhere is cold. Streets are empty. . . . "Here is Europe" I say. Cold, lonely. And, I am pacing the sidewalks once more in order to not go home. (paras. 1–3; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

More remarkably than experiences of dislocation and relocation, affectively charged texts published by *Kopuntu* also attend to the political circumstances of Turkey, which have a continuing impact on present lives. For example, longing for a past life is often accompanied or complicated by feelings of anxiety, anger, and hopelessness about Turkey that render the idea of a possible return undesirable, if not impossible. In her essay "What Was Its Name?," Sezgin İnceel (2017) writes how she chooses to live in Germany, despite all the difficulties and the painful longing for Turkey, because she "felt suffocation before leaving Istanbul." In another essay, "Is It Longing, the Destiny of the Traveler, or Reunion?," Burag Peksezer discusses how distressing it is to hear about his European, American, and Canadian friends' future plans to return to their home countries:

It is hard for me to hear it, because I cannot say it. . . . For my job, I talk with people working in companies in Turkey. We start talking about politics, although limitedly. We talk about the hopelessness, fear, tiredness, or anger that everybody has interiorized. . . .

Neither the memory nor the heart can endure this. . . . If only we didn't feel this much anxiety about the future. If only my mother didn't say "It is for the good that you left; every time we speak on the phone . . . I believe all of these things will go away. But until that time comes, I will be taking leave of more people, feeling more longing, and attaching to these moments of reunion." (Peksezer, 2017b, paras. 6, 9; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

The intense hopelessness felt about Turkey, stifling the idea of return, is closely tied up with the sense of disappointment and failure that followed the 2013 Gezi movement. As a crucial historical moment, the movement has been held accountable for decisions to leave the country and has become a keyword in describing new migration from Turkey, as is constantly mentioned in various public events, artistic works, and media texts.¹² It is no coincidence that *Kopuntu* was launched, publishing its manifesto on May 31, the start date of the Gezi movement. The affective political significance of the Gezi movement lies in the mixed feelings of hope and hopelessness that it has brought about. On the one hand, the movement has been a continuing source of hope for possible collectivities and activisms, setting a powerful experience of solidarity among diverse individuals from a wide range of social and political backgrounds. On the other, the hope sparked by the Gezi movement has been largely replaced by feelings of disappointment and failure, due more to the escalation of political oppression in the years that followed than to skepticism of the movement's success. Burag Peksezer's essay "How Have I Made Peace With My Turkishness?" conveys how this hopelessness that replaced Gezi's hope has prompted decisions to leave the country:

In 2013, Gezi came about. I have never felt this much proud of this country. . . . "This is Turkey," I said. What a hope, what a utopia it was. But "the real Turkey" reminded itself stormily. Then, I realized that I couldn't stay in this country, because every bit of happiness was doomed to be ruined; everything beautiful was to be destroyed. The idea of spending my whole life there was fearful. . . . I decided to love Turkey from a distance. (Peksezer, 2017d, para. 4; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

In a comparable essay, "Not an Escape, a Breaking Off," Hakan Karaoğlu tells his story of returning to Turkey following the Gezi movement and then moving abroad once again. He had "convinced [himself] to return to Turkey after Gezi" because "there was a sincere and righteous hope for change created by people of that country and the chance to get involved with such a hope" (Karaoğlu, 2018, para. 2). However, he decided to move abroad again because of the escalating political violence and social distrust in the years that followed the Gezi movement:

It was the time for separation once again. It was a matter of non-belonging. . . . I decided to dwell in another place and continue my personal struggle there. So, I did

¹² For example, "Welcomed to Germany?" video series by Özlem Sarıyıldız; "At the Edge of All Possibilities" lecture performance by Zeyno Pekünlü, Berlin, July 24, 2015; Gezi Festival, Berlin, June 2, 2018; "Gezi Generation' Fleeing Turkey" (Gürsel, 2018); "LGBT+ From Gezi to Berlin" (Tetik, 2018); "The Gezi Diaspora" (Zambrana, 2016)

not escape, but I broke off; I was made broken-off [from the country]. Both mentally and physically. (Karaoğlu, 2018, para. 5; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

The original Turkish verb used to describe this “mental and physical” experience of leaving the country is *kopmak*, which roughly translates as “breaking off”; its noun form is *kopuntu*. The word *kopuntu* is not used in the everyday Turkish language, it was invented by the Turkish Language Association (TDK) to translate the term *diaspora* into Turkish.¹³ Several interviewees referred to themselves as *kopuntu* or described their experiences as “being *kopuntu*” or “feeling *kopuntu*.” This resonates with many meanings: uprootedness, dislocation, expulsion, dismissal, exile, exclusion, escape, refusal, disaffiliation, withdrawal, exit, and resistance. One initiator explained in our interview that the word *kopuntu* was chosen not simply to refer to the physical move as a migrant, or because it is the Turkish translation of the term *diaspora*. Rather, the *kopuntu* “condition” indicates the disaffiliation from, or breaking of, hegemonic structures, which include nationalism, racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and militarism. It implies a refusal to take part in unwanted or disagreeable conditions, thereby bringing about feelings that potentially spark hope, including confusion and excitement, all mentioned in the manifesto. Defined and performed as such, the affective state of “feeling *kopuntu*” bridges the diverse individuals within the *Kopuntu* collective, as well as the wide range of topics and genres published in *Kopuntu*'s digital space; it also serves as a source for generating alternative ideas on diasporicity that move beyond the context of migration.

Intimacy of an Affective Digital Place and Archive

As McCarthy and Wright (2005) argue, digital sites can serve as significant, meaningful, and heartfelt places that “can be construed in terms of the expectations, intentions, needs, desires, history, and feelings that people bring to a particular space or environment” (p. 918). Among various websites, blogs, online groups, and social media accounts that mediate collective, public, and political feelings of new migration from Turkey, *Kopuntu* stands out as a distinctively affective and intimate digital space; this is largely due to its framing as a place of emotional investment, identification, and belonging from the onset through its powerful manifesto that affectively defines a “we.” As one of the initiators explained in our interview, *Kopuntu* was founded with the aim of creating an emotional “comfort zone” for “us”:

People feel better when they go to a place where there are others who go through the same troubles. They are comfort zones. *Kopuntu* intends to create such a zone to strengthen our presence here (abroad). It aims to provide people who have common sensitivities with a place to come together, tell their troubles, and share what they are going through, thereby relieving our traumas.

Kopuntu's digital space is shaped and inhabited as an affective place through practices of writing and reading about feelings, memories, and stories. The authors of *Kopuntu* ascribe a significant value to writing, especially about their affective experiences, as a way of coping with these challenging times. One of the authors, whom I met in Berlin for an interview, claimed that writing is his “major reaction to

¹³ The dictionary of TDK defines *kopuntu* as: 1. Broken-off piece; 2. Diaspora.

what is going on" and "a way of giving meaning to life again, when [he] lost his whole belief in the people." He added that *Kopuntu* provides an alternative to the more institutionalized publishing platforms, publishing all types of texts, including his essays, which are "personal and emotional expressions of what he lives." Likewise, another author who lives in Estonia described his essays on *Kopuntu* as "reflections of his momentary feelings." Observing that *Kopuntu's* publications are "mostly about feelings, not scholarly concerns," another author, who lives in Ireland, regards *Kopuntu* as a place where he can express himself and be understood by the others:

One feels different in a different place. You stay in limbo if there are not many people who can understand what you are going through. Then, you want to express and tell, even scream, what you think and how you feel. *Kopuntu* is a place where you can do this.

Writing about experiences of difficult times gains a political value and significance in its capacity to create a public memory. After I posted my interview request on *Kopuntu's* Facebook group, one member, who lives in Italy, responded with, "I want to participate, because I find it very important that you are recording what we have been living through." The member, who is currently writing a novel based on his experience of forced migration, stated during our interview that sharing and recording our stories are not only helpful for surviving and continuing to be productive; they are also our political tasks and duties that may potentially shape the future. By attributing a significant archival value to *Kopuntu*, he suggested,

We should tell, share, and put together our stories through any available means. What we have been going through should be visible and intelligible. It should be a history. Otherwise, if Turkey initiates another forced migration in the next 20 years, we all will be responsible for it.

Collective and participatory archives that emerge in digital spaces promise nonhierarchical, plural, and vernacular narratives of the past; "all kinds of stories can now become part of an evolving patchwork of public memory" (Haskins, 2007, p. 405; see also Savaş, 2017). *Kopuntu's* collectively created digital archive can be best described as an "archive of feelings" that captures, records, and shows "sensation and feeling as the register of historical experience" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 11). With regard to documentary films and videos of lesbian lives, Cvetkovich (2002) suggests that these repositories of feelings "demonstrate the profoundly affective power of a useful archive . . . which must preserve and produce not just knowledge but feeling" (pp. 109–110). These archives resist the privatization, medicalization, and pathologization of trauma, and rather make affective experiences "the focus of collective conversations," thereby giving rise to the formation of public cultures (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 4). *Kopuntu's* "archive of feelings" renders the lived and felt experiences of political oppression public in the sense that it is "accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity" (Cvetkovich, 2002, p. 8). Thus, its affective political power lies not only in recording narratives of political trauma with the hope that it will never happen again, but also in bringing people together around feelings and experiences in the here and now.

As an affective place and archive, *Kopuntu's* digital space plays a significant role in shaping and reshaping intimacy among new migrants from Turkey, who regard each other as going through similar experiences even without personal knowledge. Based on e-mails sent to *Kopuntu*, one initiator suggested that people feel an emotional identification when they read the manifesto and the essays, because they think "there exist others who feel the same way I do." For example, one of the members, who feels isolated in her current town in The Netherlands, disclosed in our interview that reading the essays on *Kopuntu* relieves her feelings of loneliness: "I don't know any of those authors in person, but I share their feelings. Then, I'm thinking that I'm not all alone. Maybe I haven't gone mad yet. I'm just going through difficult times. Together with many others."

Digital media powerfully serve migrants in sustaining intimate relations and copresence with family and friends who are geographically distant (Hjorth & Lim, 2012), but can also create intimacy among strangers by facilitating conviviality and solidarity around common interests, needs, or experiences. For example, in her article focusing on the potential of new media for diasporas and peripheralized communities, Shohat (2004) describes an exilic e-mail community from Iraq, *Gawat Izzawi*, as "the 'private' public space" and "a community of intimate strangers" (p. 281). In a similar fashion, Raun (2012) suggests that trans video blogs on YouTube bring about the possibility of self-disclosure to and testimony of "a public of intimate strangers" (p. 173), thereby enabling the formation of communities.

For Berlant (2008), what makes a public constituted by strangers "intimate" is the expectation of a shared "worldview and emotional knowledge" that is "derived from a broadly common historical experience" (p. viii). It is through the expected commonalities of experiences that an intimate public "flourishes as a porous, affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging" (Berlant, 2008, p. viii). By making the lived and felt experiences of particular social, political, and historical circumstances visible, intelligible, and shareable, *Kopuntu's* affective digital place and archive reveal and shape intimacy among strangers, both within and beyond the context of new migration from Turkey. As will be discussed in the rest of this article, the existing or expected intimacy that derives from common feelings and experiences is the starting point for *Kopuntu* to imagine and define an affinity-based collectivity, along with possibilities of hope.

Affective Collectivity and Hope

With respect to contemporary South Asian queer diasporic art, Gopinath (2010) suggests that affective texts open a doorway to intimacies among different diasporic histories and trajectories based on affiliation rather than ancestry. She argues,

The text articulates a model of queer affiliation that may indeed be transitory and fleeting, and may not coalesce into an easily intelligible or quantifiable form of political coalition, but it nevertheless produces moments of affective relationality that open the door to new ways of conceptualizing the self and others. (p. 167)

Kopuntu's manifesto is such an affective text that shows and creates possible relationalities, intersections, and affinities among diverse individuals and groups, aiming at an unbounded, heterogeneous, and affective collectivity. It suggests that "we do not need a specific political stance or a shelter wing to build up a foothold, to support each other, to create solidarity, or to keep each other alive" (Kopuntu.org, para. 10). As one member who currently lives in Turkey described it during our interview, *Kopuntu* is "a collective of individuals who come together through collective stories such as the manifesto."

In defining itself as "solidarity network" and "new generation diaspora," *Kopuntu* envisages commonalities based on shared feelings, experiences, and memories rather than particular ethnic, national, or political identities. The novelty of a "new generation diaspora" does not simply arise from the perceived differences between the recent and earlier generations of migrants from Turkey in terms of socioeconomic status, education, and lifestyle practices.¹⁴ Rather, *Kopuntu* aims to generate an alternative definition of *diaspora*, which is not framed by or restricted to particular identities and places. For example, it describes its event "Confusion," held in Italy 2017 (Figure 2), as "a social experiment, which employs a counter-understanding to the mainstream narrative of diaspora [and] continues investigating further means to conceive an alternative definition" (Kopuntu.org, para. 2). One of the initiators stated in our interview that the *Kopuntu* collective concentrates on the question, "How we can eliminate the terms that define conventional diasporas, such as religion, language, nation, and ethnicity, and rather depend on the connecting power of our feelings and experiences?" By suggesting that the definition of *diaspora* should be revised in accordance with the impact of digital media technologies, he further explained that the "new generation diaspora" revolves not around a shared physical place or the physical move from a particular place, but around a state of "mental displacement" (original English words used by the initiator):

New generation diaspora embraces not only people who physically migrated from the country. We eliminate the physical, conventional place. There exists an overall mental displacement. We have a lot in common with people in Spain or Cambodia in terms of experiences, not to mention the ones who stayed in Turkey. This is a new diaspora where mentally displaced people can come together and collaborate.

¹⁴ A large migration process from Turkey to Western European countries started with the bilateral guest-worker recruitment agreements in the 1960s. After signing the agreement in 1961 and allowing family unification in 1964, West Germany received the largest number of migrants from Turkey, followed by The Netherlands, France, Belgium, and Austria. The political turmoil of the late 1970s that escalated with the 1980 military coup and the Kurdish conflict in the 1990s prompted political refugees and asylum seekers from Turkey, many arriving in Germany. Despite their higher qualifications in comparison with earlier migrants from Turkey on average, the lack of recognition and legal status largely blocked their way into the labor market (Aydın, 2016). The arrival of the most recent migrants, with high education levels and more urban origins (mostly Istanbul and Ankara), is transforming the perceived socioeconomic profile of migration from Turkey to Germany (Türkmen, 2019). The new migration process has been described as Turkey's "brain drain" (Lowen, 2017) and "loss of intellectual elite" (Bewarder & Drüten, 2019).



Figure 2. Poster of the event "Confusion" organized by Kopuntu in Italy, 2017. Retrieved from <https://kopuntu.org/etkinlikler-events/>.

Kopuntu's alternative definition of *diasporicity* (being or feeling *kopuntu*) refers to a sense of detachment from or breaking of social, cultural, and political conditions that one finds one's self in. As mentioned earlier, the affective state of being *kopuntu* evokes various political feelings, including "negative" ones that might serve as sources for imagining and creating affinities among diverse individuals and groups. *Kopuntu's* manifesto, written in both Turkish and English, was deliberately focused around affective experiences to appeal to individuals from all over the world who share similar political feelings—whether they flow from the experiences of authoritarianism, nationalism, patriarchy, or capitalism. In his essay "Why Is It Good to Dissent All the Time?," published on *Kopuntu*, Burag Peksezer exemplifies how the shared feeling of distress might open up new political affinities and practices. He admits that, on his arrival in Dublin, he participated in the march for solidarity with refugees, activism on the right to abortion and same-sex marriage, and the campaign against the Catholic church over public education, all because he knew how it felt to be oppressed, based on his own experience in Turkey:

A person who comes from a place where everything went wrong cannot stand still and wants to be with other people who experience distress. What we lived through gave us critical eyes, a special viewpoint that prompts us to resist against unfairness. Wherever we go, it is our distress that brings us together. (Peksezer, 2017c, para. 5; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

As Day (2004) argues, collectivities that emerge from and operate through the "logic of affinity" aim to challenge and disrupt hegemonic institutions and processes "with the end of creating not a new knowable totality (counter-hegemony), but of enabling experiments and the emergence of new forms of subjectivity" (p. 740). The political horizons of *Kopuntu*, that is, its ideas, imaginations, and senses of "the politically (im)possible, (un)desirable, (un)necessary" (Gould, 2009, p. 443), are not based on clear agendas, planned actions, and more or less calculated outcomes; rather, they are focused around a search for political possibilities that can emerge from an affinity-based collectivity. "We are so confused, and we want to see what might come up from this confusion," says one initiator. After naming feelings, memories, and experiences, the manifesto finally asks, "Then, if we pull all this together, what can we achieve?" (Kopuntu.org, para. 13).

The overall ambiguity of *Kopuntu's* political agenda can be felt as a potentiality, as one member who currently lives in Turkey suggested in our interview: "What attracts me in the manifesto is its ambiguity. It seems to me that it is unfinished. It is like an invitation. It will continue to be written by our imaginations and actions." In her discussion of the possibility of hope in dark times, Stivers (2008) argues that "the very idea of hope implies lack of certainty"; she asks, "If we were sure what the truth is, or what the future would someday hold, why would we need hope?" (p. 227). Such a relationship between hope and uncertainty can also be addressed within the framework of political affect that is defined as potentials and intensities with no predetermined directions (Gould, 2009). Massumi (2003) associates affect with political hope, which is not about projecting success in a distant future with expected and calculated outcomes, but about taking the next step in the present. He suggests that the concept of affect provides "a way of talking about that margin of maneuverability, the 'where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do' in every present situation" (p. 3).

The *Kopuntu* collective envisages such an affective hope, with a gratitude for the experiences of collectivity and solidarity during the Gezi movement. The essay "Gezi Was a Struggle for Claiming Rights, Freedom, and Space," published by the *Kopuntu* network, suggests that "Gezi demonstrated the possibility of communal living" and that "the experience that emerged throughout Gezi is still interactive and irrepressible" (Kopuntunetwork, 2018 para. 6). Routledge and Simons (1995) argue that the "inner-experience," aroused by "spiritual moments" in social and political movements, "cannot be tamed by co-optation or coercion" (p. 472) and thus "best guarantee[s] freedom, whether or not resistance is 'successful'" (p. 471). The affective experience of togetherness stirred by the Gezi movement continues to guide affinity-based collectivities and to spark hope. In his essay, "How Does a Flag Emancipate Humanity?," published on *Kopuntu*, Burag Peksezer reflects on his experience of "coming together on the basis of emotion" during a pride march; he asks, "Is there a freedom bigger than this? . . . Doesn't it give you hope that one flag can gather together everybody who are free to be anybody?" (Peksezer, 2017a, paras. 3, 5; Ö. Savaş, trans.)

To sum up, in the absence of clear goals for the future, the *Kopuntu* collective focuses on the affective grounds of hope that emerge from relationalities, intersections, and affinities both within and beyond the context of new migration from Turkey. While aiming at solidarity and collaboration among new migrants who are dispersed around the world, it seeks to improve existing affinities and develop new ones with various global and grassroots political collectivities.¹⁵ In this sense, *Kopuntu's* diasporic project is in tune with the recently revitalized empirical frameworks of cosmopolitanism that can accommodate both particular and transcendent attachments, loyalties, and solidarities and create forms and spaces of belonging out of the interplay between local and global, particular and universal (Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006; Werbner, 2008).

Conclusion

As Staiger et al. (2010) suggest in their introduction to *Political Emotions*, "Perhaps we truly encounter the political only when we *feel*" (p. 4, emphasis in original). This article has addressed new migration from Turkey that has been prompted by escalating political oppression, through its collective, public, and political feelings that are communicated, circulated, and archived on digital media. With a particular focus on *Kopuntu*, which is a distinctively affective digital space and collective, this article has discussed the affective political power of digital media to create and facilitate affinities, collectivities, and possibilities of hope in difficult times.

Invested with profound and mostly "negative" feelings of new migration from Turkey, *Kopuntu's* digital space serves as an affective place and archive that opens a doorway to intimacies and affinities among diverse individuals and groups. *Kopuntu's* alternative formulation of diasporicity (being or feeling *kopuntu*), which moves beyond the context of migration, revolves around commonalities of feelings rather than particular identities and places. Digital media crucially support such an idea of an affinity-based collectivity, not only by its capacity to provide a geographically unbounded coexistence, but more significantly through its affective power to communicate, circulate, and archive feelings, thereby rendering them publicly intelligible, accessible, and shareable. These collective, public, and political feelings resist self-containment and can serve as sources for imagining and creating relationalities, intersections, and affinities that might transcend locally and historically specific situations. It is through the possibilities for, and the premises of, an affective collectivity that *Kopuntu* envisages grounds of hope.

In my analysis of *Kopuntu*, as well as in my broader ongoing research, I deliberately and committedly focus on potentialities of affective spaces of contact, both digital and physical, to explore and possibly contribute to the politics of affect, affinity, and hope that emerges in challenging times. With regard to the Public Feelings project, Cvetkovich (2012) writes, "Rather than a paranoid watch for how forms of resistance are ultimately co-opted, it's more about noticing and describing the places where it feels like there is something else happening, and passing on strategies for survival" (p. 6). Affective digital media environments constitute such places where it is worth contemplating how possibilities for collective imaginations, actions, and hope can emerge and grow in dark times.

¹⁵ The two most significant and ongoing collaborations of *Kopuntu* have been with Borgofuturo and Catcher on the Rhein.

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